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# Ars rhetorica et sacrae litterae: St. Patrick and the Art of Rhetoric in Early Medieval Briton and Ireland

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ARS RHETORICA ET SACRAE LITTERAE: ST. PATRICK AND THE ART OF  
RHETORIC IN EARLY MEDIEVAL BRITON AND IRELAND

By

Brian James Stone

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2007

M.A., Southern Illinois University, 2008

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English  
in the Graduate School  
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May 2014

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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in the field of English

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April 2014

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

BRIAN JAMES STONE, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in ENGLISH, presented on MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2014, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: ARS RHETORICA ET SACRAE LITTERAE: ST. PATRICK AND THE ART OF RHETORIC IN EARLY MEDIEVAL BRITON AND IRELAND

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Dan M. Wiley

This dissertation is the first intensive rhetorical analysis of the writings of St. Patrick. This analysis, informed by interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies, contributes to our understanding of the rhetorical nature of St. Patrick's writings, as well as the nature of rhetorical education in early medieval Britain and Ireland

The literary significance of Patrick's extant writings, *Epistola ad milites Corotici* and *Confessio*, beyond their apparent historical value, has regularly been disputed by prominent scholars. Questions of the level of education Patrick received before being assigned to the bishopric in Ireland have informed debates over the quality and importance of his contribution to Hiberno-Latin literature. This study demonstrates the significance of Patrick's texts through discussion of Patrick's rhetorical astuteness and application of classical rhetorical techniques to a new and challenging context: that of a disseminating Christian world. The rhetorical strategies witnessed in Patrick's writings are decidedly Christian and therefore demonstrate the changing rhetorical culture of the early medieval period.

The first chapters focus on *ars dictaminis* and Patrick's employment of the art of letter writing in Ireland in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. The rhetorical strategies detected in Patrick's *Epistola ad milites Corotici* are discussed relative to the socio-political and

cultural context of early medieval Ireland. The later chapters study the *Confessio* in relationship to the Confession genre in the Late Roman and Early Medieval periods. Of particular significance here is the rhetorical practice of *imitatio*, which has deep reaching theological and ideological implications.

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## CHAPTER 1

### CLASSICAL KNOWLEDGE IN IRELAND IN THE SIXTH THROUGH THE EIGHTH CENTURIES

In both Rhetorical and Celtic studies, the study of rhetoric in early Ireland is relatively unexplored. Scholars have studied Hiberno-Latin grammarians in the early medieval era in Ireland; however, such studies focus upon these texts in order to further linguistic and philological knowledge. Scholars have debated the extent of early Irish knowledge of Hellenic and Hellenistic texts. Stances on this matter vary widely, as will be discussed below. Certainly, as much of this scholarship concerns linguistic and philological problems, generally focusing on issues of etymology and orthography, it is no wonder that there has been a neglect of early Irish rhetorical theory and what original or unique forms it took in both the vernacular and Hiberno-Latin traditions.

It is the contention of the current study that a rhetorical analysis of the extant texts of St. Patrick supports the thesis that Patrick's writings reflect awareness of classical rhetorical exercises, especially *imitatio*, and that the primary text with which Patrick had become familiar with rhetoric was the Latin Bible. In an early British monastic curriculum, rhetorical exercises such as *imitatio* likely served to bring together the saying and the said in a manner that dismisses any tenets of sophism, and instead favors a rhetorical style that is both humble and simple. Instructional exercises were likely married with onto-theological precepts in a well-rounded Christian education in which students were trained to imitate models not only in their writing, but in the Christian form of life, as well.

This neglect of rhetoric in early Ireland is not without significance. Issues of rhetorical theory and practice, as well as the makeup of rhetorical curriculum, were pervasive in the early medieval period. During the centuries that separate Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and precede the Carolingian Renaissance, the fifth through the eighth centuries, debates raged between monastic scholars in Rome and Africa over the doctrine of Pelagius, a British born bishop and theologian, who argued against the study of classical letters, the texts central to the teaching of reading and writing in Latin and Greek, and all profane knowledge, including rhetoric (Riché 485). As a result of Pelagianism taking hold in Britain, in 431 Prosper of Aquitaine sent Bishop Palladius to Ireland to establish conformity with *Romanitas*, or “canon law.” Sometime later, St. Patrick, a Briton, followed. While in Ireland, Patrick composed two texts that reflect a knowledge of classical rhetoric, and shed light on the state of education in the art of rhetoric in Britain during this period. Through rhetorical analysis of St. Patrick’s *Confessio* and *Epistola ad Milites Corotici*, this study elucidates the art of rhetoric in early medieval monastic curriculum.

This task is no simple one. In an article on the website, *Confessio*, David Kelly recently wrote that “We still await the emergence of a general consensus on the fruits of such research in regard to the literary style and structure of Patrick’s writings; in the interim the precise extent of Patrick’s education in Roman Britain and/or in Gaul must, according to O’Loughlin, remain an open question.” The current study seeks to contribute to the knowledge on Patrick’s rhetorical education, as well as demonstrate his position as an inheritor of, and contributor to a decidedly Christian art of rhetoric in the early medieval world. In order to realize such an end, the methodology employed will combine

emic rhetorical analysis with an investigation of socio-historical context in a comparative framework. In other words, this study employs a close reading of Patrick's writings in order to detect rhetorical strategies indicative of contemporary rhetorical trends in rhetorical theory and practice in Patrick's contemporary context.

The current study will begin with a discussion of the socio-cultural context informing Patrick's writings. The first text to be analyzed will be Patrick's *Epistola*, which provides evidence of the significant role of the letter-writing genre in early medieval monastic schools in the British Isles. Also, this text provides ample evidence of the practice of *imitatio* in Patrick's writings, a practice that took the Pauline Epistles as the primary text of study. The case of Patrick is similar to that of Paul in that there has been debate as to whether Paul was trained in rhetoric beyond the secondary, or grammar, level (Hock 209). Much scholarship has focused on the rhetorical strategies witnessed in the uncontested Pauline Epistles. Several of these studies demonstrate elements of Pauline rhetoric that the current study argues are witnessed in Patrick's writings, the most significant of which is *imitatio*. Benjamin Fiore writes:

In addition to the protreptic/apotreptic (delineating what should be chosen and what should be avoided) functions, the rhetorical development of the *chreia* and *gnome* employs examples and demonstration by comparison, criticizes contrary stances, and can include precept in its exhortation[...]The rhetorical handbooks give instructions and strategies for the development, instructions, and strategies adapted by orators and writers to a variety of genres, including the letter. (237)

Fiore goes on to describe the use of *exemplum* and *imitatio* in the uncontested Pauline Epistles, as well as in Roman education in general. In this rhetorical curriculum, *imitatio*

was central. *Imitatio* was more than a rhetorical strategy: “Not only do examples show the doubting person that the moral life can be lived (Ep. 76.22), they become companions and guardians for the individual’s self-examination and moral progress (Ep. 104.21)” (Fiore 235). Patrick’s own self-examination will be investigated in the current study in his *Confessio*. However, this self-examination serves a rhetorical function as a model to be imitated, but also serves a regulatory function.

The latter function will be most clearly demonstrated in Patrick’s *Epistola*. Fiore explains this understanding of *imitatio* in light of the recent scholarship of Brian Dodd: “Dodd concludes that the imitation of Paul can and should be understood both as a pedagogical technique and as an implied assertion of authority. The latter is the case in that the call to imitate is a summon to conform to the pattern set by Paul as a regulative model” (238). As will be discussed at length below, Patrick imitates Paul’s example, states explicitly that this is what he is doing, and calls on others to imitate his own example, what Agamben calls the Christian form of life. Ultimately, early Christian rhetorical education continued the Roman rhetorical tradition and innovatively applied rhetorical strategies to the art of writing and did so in specific socio-cultural contexts. This will be demonstrated in Patrick’s writings.

While *imitatio* is the most significant rhetorical exercise discovered in this analysis, *progymnasmata*, and many other rhetorical exercises and strategies are evident in Patrick’s texts. Next, this study will analyze Patrick’s *Confessio* in light of the confession genre in a contemporary context. The confession is a rhetorical genre with pedagogical, as well as ideological, ends, and was an essential tool for the proliferation of the Christian church. Again, this text reveals *imitatio* as a significant rhetorical exercise

in early monastic rhetorical curriculum and takes the Pauline *Epistles* as the primary model. While Patrick's writings demonstrate the nature of rhetorical instruction in this period, all texts are considered in the rhetorical context in which they were created.

In order to begin to understand Patrick's specific cultural and rhetorical situatedness, there must first be a discussion of the state of rhetoric in the era in which he studied and wrote. In the period spanning the fifth through the eighth century, Ireland and Spain were lively centers of learning while Gaul had succumbed to barbarian invasions and severe monastic asceticism. This period in Gaul and on the continent, at one time known as the Dark Ages, is now known by medievalists as the period of contemplation; it is an era marked by the neglect of literary and rhetorical studies (Riché 497). However, the works of Late Antique thinkers were preserved in Irish and Spanish monasteries. In fact, Donatus the Grammarian had fled Africa for Spain in the middle to late sixth century to establish the monastery Servitanum. Pierre Riché says of this event, "The foundation of this monastery, which chroniclers thought was an important event, bears directly on the history of culture. The monks, led by their abbot, Donatus, brought with them a large number of books and made Servitanum an important center for studies (Riché 478). These texts were to make it to Ireland and from there reach Northumbrian monasteries (O'Croinin 227-48). Therefore, that there was communication between Ireland and Visigothic Spain during the sixth and eighth centuries is certain. From Spain came copies of Donatus's *Ars maior* and *Ars minor*. There are also extant sixth century manuscripts of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*, which include Old Irish glosses. In fact, as will be discussed at length below, it has been argued that classical authors, as they

are quoted in grammatical treatises, are the extent of early Irish scholarly engagement with classical texts.

J.W. Smit has argued convincingly, and contrary to scholarly consensus, that Columbanus, despite numerous allusions to classical literature in his letters, had no contact with classical works themselves, but by way of church fathers such as Jerome. Mario Esposito, writing prior to Smit, makes similar claims. While this debate is yet to reach resolution, it may carry little merit in the current study. After all, the form discursive practices took in early Ireland is of interest in itself. Certainly, a true understanding of this form must come by way of comparison with classical texts, as well as those in vogue in continental scholarly circles. This does not mean, however, that early Irish prose style and rhetorical theory are not of value in and of themselves and as distinct from a classical tradition.

Such has been the case in the study of the encyclopedic works of the Visigothic scholar Isidore of Seville. According to Catholic Online, Isidore succeeded the See of Seville on March 13<sup>th</sup> in 600 or 601, and held that see until his death in 636. Isidore's *Etymologies* were a compilation of a wealth of classical knowledge covering all areas of learning and were widely read in Ireland. Book I is dedicated to grammar, while Book II is dedicated to rhetoric and dialectic. These texts were deeply influenced by rhetoricians such as Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero, and Martianus Capella, and served as a thorough introduction to the classics. Irish scholars drew on this work in order to create their own grammars and rhetorics, such as the *Anonymous ad Cuimnanum*, the *Auraicept na n-Éces*, the *Hisperica Famina*, among others.

Contrary to the beliefs of many historians of classical rhetoric, classical learning was alive and well in Ireland in the sixth through the eighth centuries. In this respect, Spain and Ireland were exceptions in the early European context. While Ireland and Spain were flourishing centers of Latin learning, Gaul and the continent were immersed in studies of a simplistic nature due to the Barbarian Invasions. By the fifth century, “We find no trace of any interest in Latin letters among the Visigoths, the Burgundians, or even the Ostrogoths themselves” (Riché 62). Irish scholars, in working to establish monasteries in Merovingian Gaul in the eighth and ninth centuries, brought classical learning and were therefore pivotal in bringing about the Carolingian Renaissance in Gaul (Kendall 99). The thinker who greatly influenced the Carolingian Renaissance and had explicit ties with the Irish was Saint Bede, (672 – 735 CE), a lifelong monk at the monasteries of St. Peter and later St. Paul’s, and was named Doctor of the Church by Leo XIII (“Venerable Bede”). It is from his writings that we get much of our knowledge of the scholarly activities of the Irish in the fifth through the eighth centuries as there is little in the way of surviving manuscripts for this early period. Richard Sharpe contends that the evidence found in Bede trumps all claims of paleographical positivists who deny any such book culture in early Ireland (Sharpe 1-55).

When speaking of the Carolingian Era, or any era for that matter, one must note that periodisation is a necessary and troubled act. Any attempt at defining an era or period necessitates exclusion. Nonetheless, periodisation is a necessary aspect of historical study. The present study synthesizes various periods, some of which are seemingly at odds with one another, as designated by influential historians, in order to understand the place of the early medieval British and Irish rhetorical traditions in a continental context, as well as

within the socio-cultural context from which they emerged. Above, the fifth through the eighth centuries in Ireland have been referred to as the pre-Carolingian Era. This designation is important as it relates the significance of the texts produced and studied in Ireland in the sixth through eighth centuries to the Carolingian Renaissance. This period has also been divided into three distinct periods by Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, again, not without controversy and contestation. Nevertheless, Herren and Brown's periods are a useful tool for understanding the early Celtic church. Herren and Brown, concerned with the periodisation of Celtic Christianity, have designated the years 450 to 630 as the period of the "common Celtic church," the years 630 to 750 as the period of "the dissolution of the common Celtic church," and the years 750 to 850 as the period of the Céili Dé (Herren 3). (I removed this sentence and responded to this above)

The designation of the pre-Carolingian Era provides the literary context of the study, while that of the common Celtic church provides the historico-ideological context. The latter will be essential for understanding theological debate which informed the curriculum of early Irish schools. Of particular significance in this context is the debate over Pelagianism. This doctrine championed literal scriptural exegesis and warned against the study of secular and profane literature. Augustine of Hippo opposed Pelagian doctrine and defended the study of profane literature as a necessary aspect of Late Antique rhetorical education. More importantly, the accusations of heresy launched at Pelagius were largely perpetrated by Augustine, who condemned Pelagius's doctrine of grace. It was this heretical doctrine that inspired the sending of Palladius and Patrick. Therefore, understanding Pelagianism in Ireland is essential to an understanding of the



changing face of rhetorical practice in British and Irish monasteries in the fifth through eighth centuries.

*The Historical Context of Church and State Relations in Early Medieval Europe.*

The Barbarian Invasions of the fourth through the sixth century ended the reign of the Roman Empire and threatened the prestige and existence of classical learning. Consistent sacking of Gaul and Byzantium ensured a way of life in which learning was threatened. As the Roman Empire deteriorated, questions of authority and Church-State relations became controversial. During these centuries, Barbarian invasions caused political and social unrest. The primacy and prestige of classical learning were waning. As a result of the continuous unrest among Christian factions in Byzantium and northern Africa, Donatus, the famous Roman grammarian, would come to play a pivotal role in the preservation of classical learning in the western world. In Africa, Latin learning flourished before the beginning of the seventh century. J.N Hillgarth says, “In the fifth and sixth centuries the North African theologians still led the Latin church and North Africa also continued to produce grammarians, poets, and historians” (2). Indeed, St. Augustine of Hippo is an example of this flourishing. However, an unstable political climate and religious persecution led some monastic communities to flee for Spain: “Donatus and his 70 companions, together with their library of many volumes, were welcomed by a certain lady, Minicea, who established them on her land and patronized their Catholic monastery of Servitanum” (Herren and Brown, 223).

The monastery of Servitanum became a repository of classical learning that provided the illustrious Isidore of Seville, an influential and proliferate Spanish scholar, with a

classical library from which to build his most influential works. These works were to make their way to Ireland where they were studied fervently and were transcribed into Old Irish and Hiberno-Latin. Irish scribes used these texts to create their own treatises, such as the *Hisperica Famina* and *Auraicept na n-Éces*, texts that not only act as a resource of classical knowledge, but work to establish a distinctively Irish understanding of discourse and the universe. As an example of this style, one can look to what has been called “Hisperic” style, named for the prosaic style of the *Hisperica*. That is, a seemingly sophistic use of bombast and elevated vocabulary that serves to demonstrate the extent of the writer’s learning. Gabriele Knappe says of *Hisperic* style that it is “a kind of literary education of the faminators that appears as a modification of grammatical and rhetorical teaching of late antiquity” (159). While Hisperic style has confounded scholars for generations, its implementation makes perfect sense in a classroom context where a student might seek to outdo other students, and where a student might seek to demonstrate to the master what has been learned. It is important to note that *Hisperic* style is at odds with the simplistic rhetorical style favored in early medieval Christian writings. This demonstrates that native learning and Christian learning were likely at odds with one another at this time, a phenomenon which will be investigated in later research.

At the dawning of the Carolingian Renaissance, this knowledge was brought from Ireland to Northumbria by travelling Irish monks, known as *peregrini* (Riché 324). As Pierre Riché has said, the schools in Gaul were elementary in the sixth century. Beginning in the seventh century “a thrust came from the outside that was to give new impetus to religious culture” (Riché 324). This thrust came from Ireland to England seven

years before Roman monks (Riché 325). The transmission of texts between Spain and Ireland is therefore a quite significant event in the cultural history of the west, for Irish scholars disseminated these texts to the Gaulish schools that would serve as the foundation of western scholarly pursuit and eventually the university system in the west. Importantly, this event is a part of the history of discursive practices, and Ireland provides a unique example of the uses of classical rhetoric in a specific socio-historical context.

The arrival of Christianity in Ireland was motivated from the outset by political concerns. The same controversies that had drawn the attention of Rome to North Africa emerged in Ireland, as well. Charles Thomas elucidates the events: “In 429, Prosper noted that heresy was present in Britain as well as Gaul. Specifically a Pelagian heretic Agricola, son of a Pelagian bishop Severianus, was insidiously corrupting the congregations of Britain, *ecclesiae Britanniae*, with his teachings” (24). In 431, Pope Celestine, faced with the threat of Pelagian heresy in the British Isles, sent Palladius from Rome to Ireland. Sometime in the middle of the fifth century (Thomas argues around 493 although this view is contested) St. Patrick was dispatched from Rome to Ireland. These events would not be insignificant. As a result of these politically motivated appointments, we have St. Patrick’s *Epistola ad Milites Corotoci*. This is the earliest extant composition written in Ireland, along with the *Confessio*, and is a prime example of the *ars dictaminis*, the rhetorical art of letter writing, in the early Middle Ages (Murphy 195). These bishops, Patrick and Palladius, were sent to Ireland not only in order to convert its inhabitants to Christianity, but also to bring those Christians already present into compliance with Roman Canon Law; this was the beginning of the stratification of the Irish church and thus of Irish society. This tells us much about classical culture in Ireland and at a much

earlier date than was previously conceived. Murphy says, “We can certainly assume worship and instruction took place in Latin, using pre-Vulgate Biblical texts; and that goes along with a previously conveyed picture of Latinity in Ireland by, and considerably before, the year 400” (Murphy 127). The notion that Ireland had remained out of the reaches of the Roman Empire, and therefore ignorant of classical learning, may not be as self-evident as some scholars have claimed (Lynch 111-130). Indeed, as can be seen from the evidence cited above, Ireland was an integral part of a continental scholarly community, including Spain and Merovingian Gaul, from the fifth century forward.

At the end of the Late Antique Era, Spain was a significant center of learning. J.N. Hillgarth attests to a direct connection between Spain and Ireland based upon comparative analysis and extant manuscripts. The political context in Spain was more conducive to learning than that of the continent and Africa (Hillgarth 3). Isidore of Seville (560-636 CE) was a proliferate scholar and writer whose works essentially served as an encyclopedia of the entirety of classical learning. There has been debate concerning the extent of the transmission of texts between Spain and Ireland, as Hillgarth demonstrates; however, Hillgarth, Louis Holtz, and Pierre Riché have forwarded sufficient evidence to silence this debate and to demonstrate that Irish monasteries did indeed possess a wealth of classical learning, mainly from the works of Isidore and the church fathers, such as St. Jerome. Michael Herren argues convincingly for the influence of Isidore’s writings on the *Auraicept* and the *Hisperica Famina*. Herren even provides the Old Irish title for Isidore’s *Etymologies* as *Culmen*. Most interestingly, there is an extant St. Gall Isidore copied in an Irish hand: “The evidence of the St. Gall fragment of the *Etymologies* shows that the Irish were copying as well as reading Isidore at home by

the middle of the seventh century” (Herren 250). Hillgarth provides evidence for the transmission of texts from North Africa, to Spain, to Ireland.

The evidence cited comes from Daibhí O’Cróinín’s study of computistics and the early Irish Easter table. Hillgarth says, “Ireland had received a collection of tracts on Easter begun in N. Africa and added to in Spain before c. 630” (10). In the continental pre-Carolingian Era context, the writings of Isidore are unique in that they remained an active cultural force outside of the context of their composition: “In contrast, [to other such monastic writings at this time] Isidore’s writings continued to act as a living force in cultural worlds completely remote from that in which they had been written” (Hillgarth 4). In Ireland, the most influential of Isidore’s works was the *Etymologies*. This work, vast in content and in breadth of knowledge, “constituted a ‘boiled-down’ version of the whole of Hellenistic culture, of the arts, law, medicine, and a whole range of techniques” (Hillgarth 4). The works of Isidore will provide a bridge to understanding early Irish rhetorical theories.

#### *The Spanish Context and The Illustrious St. Isidore of Seville*

As was noted above, Spain became a repository of late Antique Roman learning in the Pre-Carolingian Era. In the fifth century, Roman education was still prestigious throughout the west. In the educational system of Rome, grammar and rhetoric were the primary areas of study. Riché says, “Rome preferred to place its emphasis on the establishment of ‘secondary’ schools, the schools of the grammarian and the rhetor, which alone would permit the formation of the type of man Rome desired” (Riché 3). One should not think of the study of grammar as we understand it in a contemporary

context. During the golden age of Latin grammatica, it was much more: “Working with the historical, legal, and scientific allusions contained in the text, the grammarian introduced his pupil to the different branches of ancient learning and, in the process, gave him a vast general cultural background” (4). After this period, the student would go to the rhetor for advanced training in *progymnasmata*, such as *suasoriae* (deliberative rhetoric) and *controversiae* (forensic rhetoric). The disciplinary distinction between grammar and rhetoric is at times unclear and it should be noted that even in the late Roman period, the distinction was at times vague (5). The Monastic Movement, which began in the fifth century, aspired to realize classical educational ideals while emphasizing “moral, intellectual, and spiritual training” (101). Asceticism and contemplation grew alongside studies of Latin grammar, rhetoric, and literature. This was especially true in Ireland, where “They undertook the study of Latin primarily to learn the Bible and thus were led to study hymnic poetry, history, and rhetoric (Riché 312). The result of early Irish erudition is witnessed in the letters of St. Columbanus. The Visigothic Dynasty in Spain is an example of the early flowering of monastic education and the preservation of Latin learning.

In the Visigothic Dynasty, Latin grammar and rhetoric were the primary focus of study. This is true of the Court of Toledo as well as Servitanum. Rhetoric was studied as a means of Scriptural exegesis, as per Augustine, and was also used in “judicial eloquence” (261). Roman rhetoric was alive and debated during this period along with Stoic morality which was a focus for Visigothic scholars (276-277). This is interesting as the Monastic Movement in Gaul and on the continent in large part condemned the reading of profane texts, such as Virgil, the Stoics, or the Roman grammarians and

rhetoricians. This debate was one that continued to show its face throughout the medieval period. Isidore, following Augustine, was a proponent of the reading of profane texts side by side with the sacred. Riché says of Isidore,

The Christian orator, thanks to Isidore, could develop a style that, while abandoning the obscurities of profane rhetoric, remained faithful to beautiful language[...]he reiterated the requirements of Cicero and Quintilian[...]Like Augustine in the fourth book of his *De doctrina christiana* – thinking especially of bishops – a classical tradition that had too often been betrayed. (301)

Riché makes clear Isidore's indebtedness to Roman thinkers while also noting the uniqueness of Isidore's appropriation of their works. Isidore's intentions were to create an encyclopedic text that could be passed down to subsequent generations of Christian scholars. Therefore, Isidore puts these texts to Christian ends: "it would be better to be a grammarian than a heretic because the knowledge of the grammarians can be profitable for our way of life as long as one nourishes himself from it for a better end" (Riché 296). Isidore sees value in the study of Roman thinkers, but only as long as such study serves the Christian life.

While Isidore's extant texts are versions of classical works, they are versions bent to the ends of Isidore's discursive practice. John Henderson comments on this in his discussion of Isidore's letters to Braulio of Zaragoza,

The *Etymologiae* address themselves, not just to Braulio's Saragossan see, and to every other site of learning in the land, but to the promulgation of a national policy promoting classical education[...]As promised, we are told, find one work

of vast effort to realize the present regime within a seamless continuity with the world of classical antiquity. (Henderson 17)

Henderson hits upon the political agenda of Isidore's *Etymologies*. Gian Biagio Conte forwards a similar thesis: "the ensemble of his works should be considered, not as an aseptic product of the study, but as an organic proposal (and a functional proposal, as his fortune throughout the Middle Ages would demonstrate) to systematize culture for the purpose of training new generations and new ruling classes" (712). Two important points are related here. First is the uniqueness of Isidore's appropriation of classical learning. Second, that such an appropriation was inspired by political considerations. It is no small wonder then that the *Etymologies* begin with the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic as in the Roman rhetorical tradition, these are the arts that are said to bring one power and prestige.

#### *The Irish Context and Texts*

Beginning in the fifth century and continuing through the eighth century, there was a proliferation of Irish grammatical and rhetorical texts indebted to Roman thinkers and Latin Biblical style. Louis Holtz claims there is a "well attested existence of texts composed for pedagogic purposes in Ireland before the year 700" (Holtz 136). Hillgarth also claims, "Nowhere else outside Isidore's own Spain [but Ireland], can one find anything approaching either the range of works used or the range of writers using them" (Hillgarth 9). This rhetorical tradition begins with an account of early examples of *ars dictaminis* and confession, such as St. Patrick's *Epistola* and *Confessio*.

The earliest extant writings from Ireland are the fifth century texts of St. Patrick. Analysis of the rhetoric employed in these texts demonstrates an early monastic rhetorical



curriculum and art of rhetoric that included *progymnasmata*, *ars dictaminis*, and *imitatio*. Considering the three traditional components of rhetorical pedagogy are theory, practice, and imitation, it is clear that practice and imitation triumphed over explicit study of theory in this period. The *progymnasmata* are preliminary school exercises, or “beginner’s textbooks on composition” (Hock and O’Neill 3). While there are many versions of these exercises from antiquity, it is likely that those of Hermogenes or Quintilian were available to Patrick. Kennedy claims the only Latin versions available prior to 500 A.D. were those recounted by Quintilian in *Institutio Oratoria* 1.9, 2.4, and 10.5. In these sections, Quintilian discusses *paraphrasis*, *aphorism*, *criae*, *ethologiae*, *narratio*, *topos*, *theses*, and *declamatio*, several of which have been identified in Patrick’s texts. This evidence of rhetorical education and practice allows us to place Patrick in a rhetorical tradition contiguous with the classical and contemporary world, something scholars have struggled to achieve heretofore.

Paul Lynch, in attempting to find a significant place for St. Patrick in an early Irish rhetorical tradition, describes the *Epistola* and *Confessio*: “While he [Patrick] concedes that rhetoric, at least in a formal sense, is beyond him, the verbal action of the ‘Confessio’ allows his shortcomings in schooled, lettered rhetoric to give way to the particular strength of his unschooled, unlettered oratory” (115). Lynch’s study focuses on the ultimate outcome of Patrick’s rhetoric, i.e., successful proselytizing, rather than the immediate context in which Patrick’s writings emerged. In doing so, Lynch insists upon the apparent effectiveness of Patrick’s oratorical abilities, to the neglect of the rhetorical style of the writings themselves. The content of Patrick’s writings, Lynch says, provide us with insight into Patrick’s oratorical abilities, what he calls “*peccator rusticissimus*.”

Lynch's argument is that Patrick's lack of education served as a strength in the illiterate, un-Romanized outpost that was Ireland. However, the relationship between an oral and a written culture is not quite as simplistic as Lynch allows, as will be discussed in detail below. Moreover, there was an active rhetorical culture of which Patrick was a part, and which was not isolated in some uncivilized, illiterate outpost that had remained beyond the reaches of the Roman Empire. Patrick carried the art of rhetoric, which he likely learned in a British monastic school, to Ireland. Reflections of classical rhetoric are witnessed in the rhetoric of Patrick's writings.

That rhetorical tradition of which Patrick is the beginning has been the subject of scholarly debate based largely upon arguments for, or against, classical learning in early Ireland. Kuno Meyer, writing in the early twentieth century, claims, "Again, the Irish were not outside that great unity of the Celtic world, which is one of the most remarkable facts in ancient Celtic history[...]" (1). Meyer goes on to discuss what he perceives as evidence in Patrick's *Epistola* of the presence of rhetoricians in Ireland before the arrival of Patrick: "It is clear now, I think, that Patrick here refers to pagan rhetors from Gaul resident in Ireland, whose arrogant presumption, founded upon their superior learning, looked with disdain and derision upon the unlettered saint" (Meyer 10). Considering the Pelagian controversy cited above, it would not at all be unlikely that there would be Roman churchman in Ireland at this point. It could also be the case that the *rhetors* Patrick alludes to were present in Britain where there was a well established ecclesiastical see to whom Patrick likely reported, which was standard ecclesiastical practice for bishops sent abroad. Bieler considers Patrick's defending himself against attacks from *rhetorici* (rhetoricians) as evidence of the debate as it took shape there: "[...]he openly

rebukes the *rhetorici*. This was the normal attitude of early asceticism. The community to which Patrick belonged before his mission to Ireland would have taken no interest in the classics” (Bieler 1952, 10). Here, there seems to be evidence for Patrick's engagement in the Pelagian debate, a debate which was concerned not just with orthodox practices, but as is evidenced here, with rhetorical education.

Evidence gathered in this study illuminates the possibility that Patrick was not simply uneducated, but that his training was received in a context in which the ‘cult of Muses’ was shunned and literal scriptural exegesis, imitation of Pauline Epistles, was coupled with *progymnasmatic* exercises in the Quintilianic tradition. Taking the monastic school at Lerins as an exemplar of the type of education Patrick was likely to have received provides a framework from which to begin sketching a picture of the rhetorical curriculum Patrick studied.. Indeed, Ryan does just this and argues that “The illustrious names in the early history of this monastery are all of aristocrats who had received in youth the finest intellectual training which the rhetors could give. When won over to the monastic ideal they entered as heirs into a new inheritance, the study of the Holy Scripture” (373). Ryan identifies Patrick as having carried this tradition with him into Ireland (373), but still claims that his education was lacking and that his contributions to the art of rhetoric are at best limited. Drawing on this understanding of the context of rhetorical education in this period, the current study, through close analysis, demonstrates the extent of Patrick’s rhetorical education and the type of rhetorical curriculum in which he was trained.

A study that supports this thesis has been undertaken by D. R. Howlett entitled *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style*. In this text, Howlett analyzes the rhetorical

and stylistic structure of Celtic Latin works from the fifth through the tenth centuries. With reference to the rhetorical structure of both Hebrew and Greek scriptural passages, Howlett illustrates the use of both chiasmus and parallelism in the letters of Patrick. Patrick's writings, as well as those of Columbanus, demonstrate not only the use of these rhetorical tropes common to the Scripture, but they are also organized according to a mathematical structure called the Fibonacci sequence. Howlett explains: "The patterns exhibit balance not only in the statement and restatement of ideas, but in the numbers of words and syllables and letters. These are arranged in one of two forms, either perfect symmetry or division by extreme and mean ratio, the golden section" (18). This Christian method of composition was drawn from a Platonic understanding of the mathematical ordering of the universe. As the creator had created the universe mathematically, so the creator of a composition should mathematically structure his writing. Thomas Charles-Edwards cites Howlett and explains Patrick's conscious rhetorical effort, one not born of ignorance, but of aesthetic monastic training:

What Patrick was attempting to do – and achieved with great success – was to write a biblical Latin. His principal stylistic weapon was the device known as chiasmus, namely placing one's text in ABBA order[...]This pattern is the main structural device of Hebrew poetry but is also carried over into prose. The direct result of ordering a text in such a way is that it cannot be read lineally, because A1 and B1 must be read with A2 and B2 in mind, as well as *vice versa*. Having advanced so far in a certain direction, the text then doubles back on itself and produces a series of variations on its earlier themes, only now in reverse order.

(231)

The work of Charles-Edwards and Howlett demonstrates clearly that Patrick was far more than a layman, but that his training determined his rhetorical sensibilities. Moreover, that Patrick mentions the *rhetorici* in such a negative light reveals that he was likely involved in a contemporary debate concerning pagan literature, the Scripture, and rhetorical education and practice.

That this debate can be witnessed in the earliest extant writings in Ireland demonstrates that from the very beginning Christians in Ireland participated in the continental debate concerning rhetorical training and pagan literature. The Irish appropriation of classical grammar and rhetoric was in a continuous state of flux in the fifth through eighth centuries. In the fifth century, the struggle against Pelagianism, which was initiated by the Roman church, defined the character of the Celtic church, and therefore of the monastic curriculum and rhetorical training (Herren 2002, 5). The only extant writings from this period are those of St. Patrick discussed above. By the sixth century, the hold of Pelagianism gave way to a unique form of semi-Pelagianism. Following the model of the monastic school at Lérins, St. Finnian of Clonnard, a sixth century scholar and the founder of the monastery at Inisfallen, sought “a union of biblical with the old rhetorical studies and the shifting of emphasis from the latter to the former” (375). The model of Lérins was designed with the teachings of St. Augustine in mind. It is not insignificant that St. Finnian was a leading figure in the development of Irish monasticism, for this version of the Augustinian theory of rhetoric is witnessed in Ireland throughout the Pre-Carolingian Era.

## CHAPTER 2

### A VIEW OF ST. PATRICK AND HIS WRITINGS

A rhetorical analysis of St. Patrick's *Epistle* reflects the author's awareness of classical rhetoric, particularly those exercises associated with *progymnasmata*, scriptural *imitatio*, and the *ars dictaminis*. This is significant, for scholarly debate has continued for over a century regarding Patrick's knowledge of the classical tradition and the extent of his education. The question of whether Patrick was trained in classical rhetoric arises when attempting to determine whether St. Patrick truly was a man of one book, the Bible, or whether he received a rhetorical education that was in any way representative of the classical tradition; it arises in the myth of Ireland as outside of, as not having been influenced by, the classical tradition. Those who believe Patrick received very little education, and most certainly not a rhetorical education, cite Patrick's poor Latinate style and diction. However, in the writings of St. Patrick, we see evidence of rhetorical training in the *progymnasmata*, *ars dictaminis*, and New Testament imitation practices. Patrick's *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus* demonstrates a classical education in the art of rhetoric and its implementation in a specific socio-political context.

While there has been much debate as to Ireland's place in continental scholarship of the pre-Carolingian Renaissance, it is generally agreed that before the time of Patrick there was an active church in Ireland. At least, the church was active enough that Pope Celestine, concerned with the influence of Pelagian doctrine in the British Isles, sent a bishop to attempt to persuade Irish churchmen to adhere to *Romanitas* even before Patrick; this bishop's name was Palladius (MacShamhrain 27). Unfortunately, little is known of Palladius's mission and even less is known about the nature of rhetorical

education in early monastic schools. In fact, whether the legends surrounding the significance of Patrick's missionary work could be solely attributed to Patrick has been challenged for some time in a theory termed "The Two Patricks." This theory holds that the works and deeds of Palladius and his successor to the bishopric of Ireland, Patrick, have been conflated. This theory, which had been circulated by scholars in Ireland since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Bieler 3), is fully elucidated in T.F. O'Rahilly's "The Two Patricks," published in Dublin in 1942. Bieler, in "The Mission of Palladius: A Comparative Study of Sources," disentangles the confusion born of centuries of problems witnessed in various types of manuscripts historians have turned to. One problem is that both Palladius and Patrick would have been referred to as "*patricius*," 'distinguished citizen.' The most difficulty arises from the mythic nature of hagiography and legend. However, Bieler does state that in this tradition we see evidence for a strong Christian community in Ireland by the fifth century:

[...]at this time sufficient Christians were in Ireland to make the presence of a bishop necessary; perhaps the danger of Pelagianism prompted this step at a moment when under normal circumstances it would have been considered as premature. Palladius appears to have risen from the diaconate immediately to the episcopate; he was probably ordained in Rome, by the pope himself, this is obviously meant by the words, *Ordinatus a papa Caelestino*. In any event, he held his commission from the See of Rome. (3)

Not only was there a strong enough Christian presence, but this presence was one dictated by the church in Rome. As Palladius himself, according to Bieler, was ordained

in Rome, the myth of an Ireland free from the reaches of the Roman Empire carries no weight in contemporary Celtic Studies scholarship.

“The Two Patricks” theory, while not accepted by Bieler and most contemporary scholars, does illustrate the significance of Palladius’s mission and the strong Christian presence prior to Patrick’s arrival. However, it is in Patrick’s writings that evidence for the nature of early medieval British and Irish rhetorical education lies. Patrick’s writings have been posited as the earliest extant writings in Ireland, even by recent scholars of rhetoric; however, a compelling case has been made for Latinity in Ireland before the year 400 (MacShamhráin 27). In this light, Patrick was an effective bishop and rhetorician who worked to proselytize an Ireland that had a Christian presence. It should be noted that even Patrick’s native Britain at this time was in chaos politically and Christianity was by no means the official or only religion (Orme 18). There were, however, established schools in Roman Britain at this time. The Roman conquest of Britain began in 43 CE, and there is abundant evidence of Latin literacy over the several hundred years that follow and lead to the time of Patrick (Orme 16). It was in Roman Britain that Patrick received his education. Therefore, before attempting an analysis of the text-internal evidence of Patrick’s rhetorical education, an analysis which will shed light upon early medieval monastic rhetorical education in Britain and Ireland, it is necessary to first turn to what is known of Patrick’s education and life, as well as what little is known of Roman Britain education in this period, as this knowledge will inform the interpretation of text-internal evidence in this study.

There has never been any doubt whether or not Patrick received at least some education, but rather the extent of his education. The certainty that he was educated is



due to the class to which Patrick was born in Britain: “Patrick’s Latin name, *Patricius*, in fact means ‘noble, of the Patrician class,’ the group who had ruled Rome ever since Romulus and Remus legendarily founded the city a thousand years earlier” (Freeman 2). No student of Patrick has ever questioned whether Patrick was educated, but rather the question has been what the value of his seemingly stumbling prose might be to literary scholars. The controversy lies in the extent to which he was educated after being captured by Irish raiders in his youth (16 years old is the estimate) and carried away as a slave.

Philip Freeman provides a narrative of these events:

[...]At the age of fifteen, he was kidnapped by Irish pirates from his family’s villa in Britain near a place named Banaventa Berniae, transported across the Irish Sea, and sold into slavery along with many of his family’s servants. For six grueling years, he watched over sheep day and night for a single master. (xviii)

During these years, Patrick experienced visions and a profound calling from God. After escaping from slavery, he returned home to Britain, where, in time, he was consecrated as a bishop and, according to his own wishes, returned to Ireland to spread the word of God.

Many scholars now argue that during the years following his captivity, Patrick must have received further education as part of his preparation for the bishopric. Despite the general consensus of scholars writing in the early and mid twentieth century who would claim that Patrick was not educated beyond the elementary level, it is now clear that Patrick was educated in rhetoric, at least to the Roman education curriculum’s secondary level, that of the *grammaticus*, and trained in *ars dictaminis* and *progymnasmata*. Daniel F. Melia states the matter plainly: “In any event, the notion of a truly ‘unlearned’ and super-rustic Patrick cannot be sustained against the internal

evidence of his Roman rhetorical education” (99). Analysis of the text-internal evidence of Patrick’s writings demonstrate that Melia is absolutely correct in his assertion; however, scholars do not have a clear understanding of what Roman rhetorical education looked like in Roman Britain. Nicholas Orme, in his landmark study *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England*, explains that “virtually nothing is recorded about schooling in the island, which means that we can only conjecture its nature from what is known about the process in the rest of the Empire” (16). The current study seeks to add to Melia’s assertion that text-internal evidence in Patrick’s writing will also improve understanding of early medieval education.

As Orme has pointed out, in Roman Britain the Roman model for education would have been the standard. This included three steps. The first was time spent in elementary learning, gaining skills in reading, writing, and math. The second included time spent with the *grammaticus*, where a boy would learn composition and interpret literary works. In this second stage, students would have been exposed to *progymnasmata*, ‘preliminary exercises’ that were intended to prepare them for time with the rhetorician, which constituted the third step of a complete education. These exercises, according to those attributed to Hermogenes, included the following: Fable; Narrative; *Chreia*; *Maxim*; Refutation and Confirmation; Common-Place; *Encomion*; *Syncrisis*; *Ethopoeia*; *Ecphrasis*; Thesis; Introduction of a Law (Kennedy). The student would be challenged to compose, for example, a fable, and to memorize it and present it to the class. These preliminary exercises prepared the students for the next and final step in education: rhetoric. In this stage of rhetorical education, students were introduced to *declamatio*. These exercises were similar to *progymnasmata*, but dealt with “real world” matters, as

opposed to fable, etc. However, elements of *progymnasmata* were drawn on and incorporated in *declamatio*. Christopher Forbes explains these complex rhetorical exercises and their role in Roman education: “Roman writers tended further to subdivide declamations into those on legal or forensic topics (*controversiae*) and those on political or deliberative topics (*suasoriae*)” (137). In *declamatio*, Aristotle’s three-way division of rhetoric, deliberative, judicial, and forensic, is influential. Cicero, Quintilian, and Seneca the Elder all wrote on and practiced *declamatio*, so it is clear that *progymnasmata* and *declamatio* were integral elements of Roman education.

The form Roman education took in early medieval Britain and Ireland is, as has been noted, still unclear. It is certain that rhetoric was considered as important in this new context. Orme provides interesting economic details that elucidate this point:

Salaries [for professors] appear to have been provided only in major towns, but as late as the year 376 the imperial government ordered the chief cities of Gaul to provide chairs of Latin grammar, Greek, and rhetoric from public funds – the rhetoricians receiving one and a half times as much as the others. (17)

This is important as it points to the fact that not all schooling at this point was entirely monastic, but there were secular schools available in towns. In fact, towns are known to have had their own teachers, whether salaried or not. However, it is clear from text-internal evidence that Patrick’s education was indeed monastic, as is witnessed in the overwhelming presence of New Testament allusions. Even though Patrick missed a great portion of time spent with his professors while living in captivity, it is not necessarily the case that he did not excel and reach the heights of learning. As Ronald F. Hock has noted, aristocratic boys often times were allowed to advance to higher levels of education more

quickly, with more resources and guidance (199), something still witnessed in our society today.

Even with this knowledge, there is much about Patrick's education that remains to be considered in order to understand fully his writings. Much scholarly debate has ensued regarding the socio-historical context and Patrick's education following Kuno Meyer's famous lecture, "Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century and the Transmission of Letters," given in 1912. The debate has considered evidence in Patrick's writings, as well as conjecture concerning what his preaching style must have been like to be effective in fourth century Ireland. Considerations of Patrick as an orator must be conjecture; scholars have only his two surviving writings: *Confessio* (*Confession*) and *Epistola ad Milites Corotoci* (*Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*). Since one can only analyze the contents of the writings at hand, a discussion of what Patrick's preaching style may have been like has proven unrewarding despite recent attempts by scholars. Yet, as is discussed below, the *Epistola* was intended to be read aloud to a crowd, but not by Patrick. The letter was presumably intended to be read at mass and, as is stated in the letter, to any in the territory of Coroticus who would listen. Ben Witherington III describes this oral textual phenomenon in relation to the New Testament: "Most ancient documents, including letters, were not really texts in the modern sense at all. They were composed with their aural and oral potential in mind, and they were meant to be orally delivered when they arrived at their destinations" (8). This practice would likely have continued in a pre-literate society such as that of early Ireland. Indeed, early Christian conceptions of the distinction between writing and orality are quite complex. For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish between Patrick's readers, who would have likely been something along

the lines of a *lector*, indeed literate, and his audience, anyone who gathered to listen to the letter being read, and most likely at mass.

The *Epistola* and *Confessio* were written in response to two specific contexts/events: one, the killing of innocent Christians by the soldiers of Coroticus; the other, accusations against the bishop that came from those who were evidently his ecclesiastic peers in Ireland in the fifth century, although a case has been made that these ecclesiastical peers could have been present in Britain, which had a much more organized ecclesiastical see. Yet, writers as early as Cicero and Seneca the Younger utilized letter writing as a pedagogical and aesthetic medium, as a didactic dialogue paralleling Platonic dialogue, making letter writing not wholly communicative in the sense of correspondence. Analysis of letter writing, here Patrick's, as a rhetorical act, and as a rhetorical practice taught in early medieval monastic schools, can provide scholars with insight into the transition from the rhetorical practices of Late Antiquity to those of the Early Medieval Period. Les Perelman explains this changing nature of rhetoric in the later Middle Ages: "During the Middle Ages, however, the written letter became a central concern of rhetorical theory. Medieval society, in general, and medieval political structure in particular, were not primarily urban...[letters] became almost solely the domain of political and ecclesiastical discourse..." (98). Perelman's explanation points to the newfound primacy of written over oral communication in the medieval period, yet as will be discussed below, studies of the earliest texts representing the transition from orality to literacy are sparse. Rhetorical analysis of Patrick's texts will therefore contribute to knowledge of the earliest instances of rhetorical writing in the early medieval period.

Along with changing rhetorical theories and practices comes changing curriculum. In Late Christian Antiquity, instruction in rhetoric continued along the path of change begun during the late Roman Empire. The need for civic debate waned and the need for communication across greater distances grew. Kennedy describes these changes:

...[A] rhetorical education came to perform other functions in addition to training in public address: it taught literary composition; it offered training for future bureaucrats in the civil service; it served as an introduction to dialectic and thus to philosophy; ultimately it provided training for preachers and controversialists in the Christian church. (317)

Rhetoric still fulfilled a political function in civil society, but the geopolitical landscape was on a continuous path of expansion and due to this writing came to occupy an important place in rhetorical curricula. Many of the cherished rhetorical exercises from antiquity were continued in the early medieval period, including imitation, *progymnasmata*, *suasoriae* and *controversiae*. The current study finds that early medieval rhetorical education consisted in large part of *imitatio* – as did Hellenic and Hellenistic curriculum - and that there does indeed appear to have been a curricular shift from the primacy of classical texts to the New Testament as the main medium of instruction. This is demonstrated in Patrick's letter.

Rhetorical analysis of Patrick's letter has been attempted by other scholars, yet not in a convincing or rewarding manner. Paul Lynch, in his article “‘*Ego Patricius, Peccator Rusticissimus*’: The Rhetoric of St. Patrick of Ireland,” attempts a rhetorical analysis of Patrick's writings, and despite the shortcomings of his research, Lynch has brought the attention of rhetorical studies to early Irish texts. Aside from a thesis based

solely around the notion of rusticity derided by Melia and contemporary Celtic Studies scholarship at large, the problem with Lynch's study is his prioritizing a conjectured orality over Patrick's writings, oversimplifying the relationship between orality and literacy. Lynch claims that Patrician scholars have failed to appreciate Patrick's abilities as an orator due to low judgments of the quality of his writings (112). There is, however, some truth to Lynch's claim. Indeed, when compared with the Latinate style of his near contemporaries, such as Jerome and Augustine, Patrick's Latin pales in comparison, as Jerome and Augustine were writing at world class, intellectual institutions and to an audience befitting such a context. Lynch is also right to point out that it was Patrick's context in fifth century Ireland that would have shaped his rhetorical style; that being said, Lynch does fail to see this evidenced in the rhetoric of Patrick's writings, but rather draws attention to Patrick's apparent success as an orator, a claim that can hardly be substantiated. And as Melia rightly points out, there is no way to know what sixth and seventh century standards of good Latin might have looked like in the British Isles.

Comparison to the likes of Augustine and Jerome is unfair as they were elite intellectuals, present at prestigious intellectual centers very near the Mediterranean world where Latin was the native tongue. Therefore, "Without useful and truly comparable texts from the same period and dialect area, we can never be sure which elements of his language are dialectal, stylistic, or even idiolectal" (Melia 97). Lynch argues that, despite the shortcomings of Patrick's Latin, the success of Patrick's oratory is what makes him remarkable; however, what Patrick's oratorical abilities were pose interesting questions, but his writings offer a more concrete source for our study. One must also draw a distinction between a "historical," or real Patrick, and a pseudo-historical, or

mythological Patrick. The Patrick that came to be *the* central character in so much propagandistic literature of the seventh through the thirteenth centuries is certainly a Patrick distinct from “historical reality.” At the very least, we must bear this distinction in mind when considering the outcomes of Patrick’s proselytizing that Lynch bases his thesis on. Moreover, the relationship between orality and literacy is much more complex than Lynch allows.

Early in his essay, Lynch establishes a binary opposition between the pre-literate and literate, or, orality and literacy, in what he calls Patrick’s “dual-status” (112). This distinction in Lynch’s essay has already broken down before he has a chance to make it as he follows an outdated thread of scholarship that would claim Patrick had no formal Roman education. As has been made clear up until this point and as will be demonstrated throughout this study, this is far from true. Putting text-internal evidence aside for a moment, that the Roman church would establish an uneducated bishop is far from historically accurate. However, if it were true that Patrick had received no formal education, even if he lived in a “literate” society, he would by definition be illiterate. Therefore, there would be no dual-status to speak of. It is necessary to understand the relationship between orality (which is the mark of the preliterate society) and literacy in a more nuanced light.

Several scholars have taken up this question and there has been much debate regarding the relationship of orality and literacy in early Ireland. One can conjecture that there were native poets and bards who harbored suspicions over the power of writing similar to those given by Socrates in *Phaedrus*. In Lynch’s thesis, there is the preliterate and the literate. Once you have literacy, you are no longer preliterate. Yet, there was



writing in Ireland before Patrick's arrival in the form of Ogham, (an early form of writing, based upon Latin, used to mark territorial boundaries and graves cites) which has been attested in Ireland as early as the fourth century (Ó Cuív 23). In no culture, and especially not in Irish culture, is there a seamless transition from the preliterate to the literate, nor can we speak of distinct ontologies within preliterate and literate cultures. In Ireland, orality and literacy coexisted for centuries in a fluctuating and reciprocal relationship. In the highly influential work *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland*, Joseph Nagy describes this phenomenon in early Irish literature: "At times, literature depicts itself as emerging from oral tradition; at other times, it appears to be running alongside it, intersecting with it, running counter to it, or all the above simultaneously" (7). The oral culture in Ireland never disappeared and *scéla* 'story, or story telling,' is still an important part of Irish culture today. Yet, it is without doubt that Patrick was preaching. It is certainly without doubt that Patrick wrote the *Epistola* and the *Confessio*. However, the distinction between speaking and writing is not so clear cut as Lynch allows. In this period, monastic curriculum consciously adapted classical rhetoric (orality) to writing, specifically the art of letter writing. Patrick's writings were intended to be read to a most likely illiterate audience and therefore these distinctions do not take us far in a rhetorical analysis.

It is essential, also, to consider Patrick in the context of early medieval Christian theories of writing and orality. Recently, Giorgio Agamben has completed a study on monastic life that elucidates these theories in the complexity of their usage in a monastic context. Agamben's analysis takes for its focus the *Rule of the Master*, an anonymous text produced sometime in the mid-fifth century and that served as the primary source for

Benedictine's rule, the primary source for the form of monastic life even today (St. Gregory's Abby). However, Benedictinism never caught on in Ireland and there were numerous rules in Ireland that were distinctively native and much more rigorous in adherence to ascetic principles (Kenney 198). The *Rule* is believed to be the compilation of several theories of the form of monastic life, a prescription for how to live the monastic life and what role reading and writing should play therein. Agamben explains that in the *Rule*, the relationship between the living word of the speaker (*logos*) who dictated the rule to the scribe, and the written word itself is much more complex than mere transcription. There is a purely dialectical tension between orality and writing. Although the word was first uttered and was then to be written down, it was done so in order that it may be read to new converts and as a continual reminder of the rule. He who writes, he who reads, and he who listens is essential in this understanding.

Early in monastic rule there was the *conscribere* "of the early rules [which] evoked a text dictated from the living voice of the Fathers and extracted and transcribed from the monk's very life" (Agamben 75). It was this spoken word which was written and was to be read heretofore. This type of scribal activity is distinct from the *describere* which copied manuscripts, rather than spoken word: "*describere* is the technical term for the scribe who copies from another text" (Agamben 75). Despite this distinction and the apparent primordially of the spoken word, it is in fact writing which is primordial: "there is a written text, but in reality it only lives through the reading that is made of it" (Agamben 77). The reader must recall that at this time, there was no practice of silent reading; every document was intended to be read aloud. It is not simply in recording or recitation, but a bringing to life through the reading of the written text that the rule is

powerful. Agamben continues, “Anamnesis is contained in a *lectio* that is ‘represented’ in the etymological sense, that is, it renders performatively present the reality of that which is read” (77). The *lectio*, or reading, is therefore recollection that makes present, that supplements, the reality of the text. Agamben demonstrates this conception of reading and writing as common throughout the Christian period, beginning with Christ himself. This Christian understanding of reading, based upon the Judaic tradition of the reading of the Torah, is evidenced in Luke 4:16-21. The passage is worth quoting in full:

He (Jesus) went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. (Luke 4:16-21 qtd. in Agamben 79-80).

As this passage illustrates, the significance of reading and listening to the spoken word, *logos*, as the word of God (which is proclaimed in the *Rule* and in Patrick’s Letter) has been essential to Christianity from the very beginning. While Agamben’s use of a Judaic example to demonstrate medieval conceptions of writing might be questionable, it is clear that it is unwise to dismiss Patrick’s writing in order to attend to his preaching, as his intentions in writing the letter were likely much more nuanced than Lynch allows. As

Patrick himself notes in the letter, it was written to be read. In this period, reading was not silent reading, a much later invention, but reading aloud. It is the case in Christian thought that “the reading is not limited to recalling or commemorating past events, but in some way renders present the ‘word of the Lord,’ as if it were newly pronounced in that moment by the living divine voice” (Agamben 81). The distinction between orality and writing made by Lynch is far too simplistic and denies the true richness of the Christian conception of the power and complexity of the written word.

To return to the issue of historical and mythological Patrick in Irish literature, Lynch’s claim that Patrick was an effective *rhetor*, and therefore we needn’t concern ourselves with the quality of his prose, does not hold up to the picture historians have provided. In fact, there is no mention of Patrick historically before the Synod of Patrick in the sixth century and until the highly propagandized saints’ lives written at Armagh in the seventh century; In other words, the cult of Patrick seems to have come into being at least two centuries after Patrick’s death (Hughes 396). Patrick does claim to have baptized thousands, but the cult of Patrick that Lynch refers to developed alongside centuries of mythologizing a legendary Patrick. What is of importance is the rhetorical context of Patrick’s writings which demonstrate his awareness of rhetorical exercises, whether through imitation of the scripture or instruction in *progymnasmata*, that were the mark of a complete education, as well as contemporary literary genres and the techniques necessary to employ them in a specific context; this is clearly the mark of an early medieval rhetorical education.

As one of only a few scholars who have dealt with Patrick’s rhetoric specifically (there is a plethora of contemporary scholarship on other aspects of Patrick that Lynch

does not consider), Lynch provides a rather simplistic conception of the early Irish political landscape and neglects the significance of the Bardic and Druidic schools that flourished before the arrival of churchmen. More importantly, Lynch does not provide an account of the scholarly conversation dealing with Patrick's Latinity, a neglect that isolates this study from Celtic Studies in general. Neglect of the historico-political context of early Ireland isolates Patrick's rhetoric from the social and political context of rhetorical pedagogy and practices of the fourth and fifth century in Britain and Ireland, a context that is essential to understanding Patrick's place in this tradition. This is detrimental as individuals such as Ludwig Bieler and Mario Esposito, to name only a couple of the most influential scholars, have forwarded knowledge on this subject that is both controversial and essential to any further scholarship. This lack of engagement with Celtic Studies scholarship, once again, is demonstrated in Lynch's direly simplistic conception of the distinction between oral and literate cultures. As Lynch would have it, Ireland consisted of primitive dunces who, to Patrick, were unable to comprehend the complexity of Roman rhetoric. In fact, it is Lynch's point that this is the very reason Patrick was successful.

Lynch's position on Patrick's audience is problematic for at least two reasons. First, the schools of the *filid*, an organized and powerful group of poets versed in genealogy, oral tradition, legal tracts, and erudition, existed before written culture and flourished long before its arrival. Though little is known about the *filid*, it is agreed that the *filid* were trained in native schools and held an important place in Irish society before the arrival of the church. Dan Wiley explains that prior to the coming of Christianity in Ireland there was "an order of learned poets, but not necessarily ones who called

themselves *filid*. The notion is that there was an ancient order of poets since Celtic Antiquity, and that in Christianity in Ireland, that order split into what became the historical *filid*, allied with the church, and the low class bards, with whom the *filid* were in competition (for patronage and such)” (Wiley). Robin Chapman Stacey discusses the learned classes of poets resident in Ireland before the arrival of ecclesiastics. While it is her contention that the *filid* did not come into being until the seventh century, after the establishment of a common church in Ireland, it is certain that there was an order of such individuals in Ireland during and prior to Patrick’s arrival. Caesar, in Book 6 of *De Bello*, available on the *Classics* website at MIT, notes three learned classes in Ireland: druids, prophets, and bards. Considering Patrick’s role as bishop and proselyte, considering the wide geographic range Patrick covered in his travels in Ireland, and considering his numerous references to such meetings in his writings, that he met with resistance from these groups, and especially the bards, or *filid*, is without doubt:

To remark that the reaction of the *filid* to these people [churchmen] was less than favorable is to engage in serious understatement. They were, after all, in direct competition with them for power, patronage, and generally speaking, the resources with which to carry on[...]it seems a good bet that pagan beliefs – if not in fact actual pagan rituals – had earlier been viewed as playing more than a passing role in the creative and intuitive process. (Stacey159)

Stacey goes on to explain that the *filid* did indeed successfully associate themselves with the church, a brilliant literary byproduct of which is the melding of oral and literate practices, without a doubt Patrick would have received resistance from such established social hierarchies. Patrick’s challenge would have lain in appealing to an audience who

revered the *filid*, not specifically in making his sermons simple to the laymen. Second, the Hellenic and Hellenistic rhetorical traditions defined rhetoric as persuading by way of *doxa*, rather than *logos*, the former being the tool of rhetoric and the latter the tool of philosophy. Rhetoric was used to persuade the uninformed masses; therefore, even if Patrick had studied rhetoric, which I argue he did, such study would have prepared him to appeal to any audience, and especially a lay audience.

While there is much about the *filid* that alludes scholars, there has been debate for well over a century concerning the extent of, as well as date of, the arrival of classical learning in Ireland. This is significant for the current study as such knowledge would provide us with a better understanding of Patrick's context, *id est*, was classical learning and especially the Latin language known in Ireland when Patrick arrived? The vernacular tradition in Ireland is the most extensive in all of Europe, and participation in continental scholarship could only take place in the language of the church: Latin. With the coming of churchmen in the fourth and fifth centuries, namely Palladius and Patrick, came entrance into the continental scholarly context. In order to contribute to this community, Irish scholars needed to obtain knowledge of Latin. While Ireland was not officially a part of the Roman Empire, from this early point Irish scholars actively participated in the continental context, receiving texts from Spain, copying them and altering them so as to make them their own. Eventually, this tradition of learning would make its way to Gaul as *peregrini* (wandering scholars) established important monasteries in Northumbria and at Bobbio. However, the extent of classical learning in Ireland in this period has been a subject of serious debate since the claims of Kuno Meyer writing in the early twentieth century.

It was Meyer's claim in the lecture titled "Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century and the Transmission of Letters" that "Gaulish scholars" were chased from their homeland, books in tote, by the barbarian invasions of the fifth century; as a result, they landed in Ireland and there established centers of learning (4). As evidence, Meyer cites the earliest extant writing to have come from Ireland: the "Letter to Coroticus" of Ireland's patron saint, Patrick. In this letter, Patrick makes direct allusion to rhetoricians present in Ireland in the mid-fifth century. It has already been noted that both Palladius and Patrick had been sent to Ireland in response to the supposed widespread presence of Pelagian doctrine in the British Isles. One would assume, therefore, that Latin learning and early versions of monastic schools must have been present as well. Meyer says, "It is clear now, I think, that Patrick here refers to pagan *rhetors* from Gaul resident in Ireland, whose arrogant presumption, founded upon their superior learning, looked with disdain and derision upon the unlettered saint" (4). Meyer claims that these rhetoricians brought with them knowledge of the scholarly traditions of Latin grammar, oratory, and poetry, as well as knowledge of Greek (4). He argues, "And yet it must have been during the lifetime of Patrick at latest that the foundations were laid in schools and seminaries throughout large parts of the country of this erudition, which soon drew the eyes of all of Europe upon Ireland as the heiress of classical learning" (4). These optimistic claims based upon little in the way of historical or textual evidence, as appealing as they may be, have been subject to much criticism. It is the case, however, that after a century of debate, Meyer's thesis may be more accurate than has been until recently believed.

The earliest evidence of this tradition, as Meyer well knew, is found not only in the grammars that have now been, with some degree of certainty, dated to the seventh



century (Law 1982). From monastic annals it is certain that Christianity was present in highly Romanized Britain by the fourth century, so it is not inconceivable that ecclesiastics versed in rhetoric were present in Ireland during those centuries. Kathleen Hughes provides an overview of the primary documents supporting this position: “We know that British bishops attended the council of Arles in 314, and that there were three British bishops at the council of Ariminum in 359” (304). As early as the fourth century, British ecclesiastics were active in a continental context. By the fifth century, there were established centers of learning:

The Pelagian controversy shows us a body of educated Christians in Britain in the first half of the fifth century. Pelagius himself was a Briton. He spent a great deal of his adult life on the Continent, but it is reasonable to assume that he had received at least a part of his education in Britain. And his writings show that his education was first-class (305).

As those monastic centers of learning that produced such fine scholars in the fifth century had grown from the seeds planted in the fourth, it is not improbable that in Britain there were resident *rhetors* who visited Ireland. By the sixth century, there were monastic centers of learning in Ireland capable of training the likes of the scholarly St.

Columbanus. The evidence for such learning and for the nature of early Irish rhetorical curriculum in the sixth century must be sought by way of text-internal evidence from Columbanus’s letters. Ó Cróinín explains the import of such analysis in the letters of Columbanus: “Columbanus was clearly the product of an intensive schooling, one that had effectively mastered the techniques of language teaching and textual analysis” (375). As Columbanus was educated in Ireland some time in the sixth century, there is evidence

of a complex curriculum at this time. Allusions to classical literature, the presence of Greek words, have led to claims like those of Meyer's, who would claim that Ireland is the harbinger of classical learning in the Middle Ages. While the texts of Columbanus are promising, the nature of the sources used by these writers is not without controversy. Ludwig Bieler and Mario Esposito took issue with these claims of classical learning in early Ireland and spilled much scholarly ink to address these questions.

Ludwig Bieler was one of the first, and most definitely the most influential, to challenge Meyer's stance of Patrick's text and the state of learning in early medieval Ireland. Bieler does contend that Patrick's Latin is poor due to a lack of formal education and training, but concedes that this worked to his advantage. Like Esposito and Smit after him, Bieler recognizes the ecclesiastical influence upon Patrick's rhetoric. In "The Place of St. Patrick in Latin Language and Literature," Bieler says of the literary influences on Patrick's letter, "[...]the rhetorical element, especially in the *Epistola*, may have its root either in the rhetorical tint of ecclesiastical literature (Tertullian, Lactanius, Augustine), or else – considering its naivete – in a routine of preaching" (76). Although Lynch does not cite Bieler once in his study, he does make a similar claim; Patrick's preaching, or oratory, is witnessed in written form in the two extant writings left by the saint.

Esposito, like Bieler, does not deny the evidence for classical learning in the letters of Patrick and Columbanus or in the grammars; however, it is the sources of this knowledge he takes issue with. Both Patrick and Columbanus demonstrate training in the classics but, Esposito claims, only by way of the church fathers. Their knowledge is thus ecclesiastical and not classical (Esposito 666). This is due in part to the privileging of sacred over profane texts in the early Christian schools, but it is also true, claims Esposito,

that Ireland of the 5<sup>th</sup> century was too inhospitable of a place to plant such a seed of learning. Esposito responds directly and harshly to such scholars who made such claims in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Zimmer and Meyer:

It is, however, difficult to believe that these scholars – pagans according to Zimmer – carrying with them select libraries of classical literature, Greek dictionaries and a manual of Greek (not Irish) conversation, would have chosen the Ireland of the *early fifth century* as a suitable haven of refuge in which to propagate their classical learning. (194)

Esposito goes on to cite Patrick's own claims about the harsh barbarousness of Ireland and the constant threats to his own life. This work is indeed a sobering critique of much ambitious scholarship. It reflects what both Murphy and Kennedy would say about the early medieval period; it was a period bereft of innovation and theorizing and truly a "dark age." However, regardless of the origins of learning, secular or through the church fathers, in early Ireland a rhetorical tradition, one full of innovation, is witnessed in the works of Patrick.

J.W. Smit builds on Esposito's work and claims that Columbanus's familiarity with profane Roman works comes not from familiarity with originals, but solely from ecclesiastical sources and even then has been overestimated. Smit argues, "Columbanus's prose indicate no direct borrowing from particular classical authors but had meanwhile come to form part of the language of the later Latin literature and, in a very special way, of the language of the late Christian literature" (170). If Smit's argument were true, then this would mean Columbanus's sources would have been the likes of Isidore, St. Jerome, and Augustine. Smit's argument suggests that these findings should be damning for an

history of rhetoric as the classical tradition was not active in early Ireland. As historians of rhetoric tend to agree that the early medieval period was a stagnant time for rhetorical theory and practice, it is significant that both Patrick and Columbanus put *dictamen* to work in a unique rhetorical context, something Bieler and Esposito overlook.

The question of Patrick's education and reading are dealt with more contemporarily by Peter Dronke in an essay titled "St. Patrick's Reading." Dronke's essay is essential for any student of the writings of Patrick as he provides a thorough review of early twentieth century scholarship on Patrick while providing an interesting, retrospective analysis of some heated debates. Dronke suggests that Patrick's writings reveal a much more complex understanding of rhetoric and a much more sophisticated education than has been accepted by the likes of Esposito. For example, Dronke cites Bieler's "The Place of St. Patrick in Latin Language and Literature" which, as Dronke proclaims, remains the authoritarian text on the problems. Dronke's analysis highlights the influence, if not direct imitation, of Augustine (especially in the *Confessio*) and Cyprian. While one might argue that this does make a case for ecclesiastical rather than classical influence, it certainly is nevertheless a development in early medieval rhetoric, showing that early medieval rhetorical theory may not have been in as stagnant a state as Murphy and Kennedy might suggest. Dronke's reading of the *Confessio* demonstrates Augustinian stylistic patterns throughout Patrick's text: "In particular, Augustine has a parallelism that consists in combining a passionate personal utterance and a biblical echo in the same sentence or group of sentences, so that the personal and biblical moments are juxtaposed, made symmetrical syntactically and harmonized emotionally" (26). Dronke explains further how such stylistics pair with conscious use of rhetorical device: "But the

use of rhetorical devices – anaphora, parallelism, antithesis, rhythmic cola – is made special, both in Patrick and Augustine, by their unusual habit of pairing sentences one of which is biblical and the other the writer’s own” (33). Such a rhetorical style is one aspect of *ethopoeia*, for to put oneself in a biblical context is to appeal to a Christian audience. This is further evidence of monastic innovations in rhetorical theory and practice.

It is difficult to speak of any one current or trend in rhetorical education in the fifth and sixth centuries on the continent, or in Britain where Patrick would have received his education. There were scholarly and monastic communities caught in debate over the ethical implications of the study of profane texts alongside the scripture. In Patrick’s time, he would have undoubtedly encountered these concerns in the works of Jerome and Augustine, concerns later written about by the likes of Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great (Riché 152-154). A program of study that did away with pagan texts was proposed in the third century of the common era: “Why should he go to the pagan *rhetors*, poets, scholars, and historians when he had the Epistles of Saint Paul, the books of Genesis and Kings? The Bible was a work rich and varied enough to replace the liberal arts” and such a program was “adopted by monks in later centuries” (Riché 8). In the second book of *De doctrina christiana* Augustine championed the study of pagan literature, but only in order to strengthen the rhetorical and exegetical skill of the student:

For we ought not to refuse to learn letters because they say that Mercury discovered them; nor because they have dedicated temples to Justice and Virtue, and prefer to worship in the form of stones things that ought to have their place in the heart, ought we on that account to forsake justice and virtue. Nay, but let

every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master; and while he recognizes and acknowledges the truth, even in their religious literature, let him reject the figments of superstition. (2.18.28)

It is clear to see from these examples how the debate over Patrick's education has continued for so long. The types of curriculum developed in monastic communities varied from denomination to denomination and from sect to sect. For centuries, there was debate regarding the study of classical rhetoric and pagan literature. However, Riché's historical account is highly regarded and alongside texts relating the history of monasticism in early Ireland, Gaul, and Britain, we can sketch a convincing account of Patrick's training in scripture and rhetoric.

There are two traditions regarding the location of Patrick's studies, according to Ryan. One holds that Patrick traveled and studied in Gaul and Italy, while another would claim that Patrick studied with St. Germanus at Auxerre (Ryan 60). If the latter were true, there is no doubt that Patrick would have been exposed to a rhetorical education second to none. Germanus was known to have defeated the Pelagians using his superior rhetoric (MacErlean). Significantly, Palladius, Patrick's ecclesiastical predecessor in Ireland, had chosen Germanus as his delegate to Britain (Bieler 1948, 4). Therefore, there is already an interesting connection between Germanus and Patrick. The former tradition, which could place Patrick at Lérins, a monastery known for producing great writers (Besse), is persuasive as well. Ryan adopts a view that combines these traditions: "Patrick made his home at Auxerre until he set out to begin missionary work in Ireland. We are told that he studied the 'Canon,' that is to say the text of the Old and the New Testament, under the illustrious St. Germanus" (66). During this time, Patrick studied scripture with Germanus

(Ryan 66). Ryan continues, “Other studies than Scripture he seems never to have attempted, in striking contrast with the leading churchmen of his age in Gaul[...]all of whom had received the education of their class in eloquence and polite literature” (66). There is weight to Ryan’s argument that Patrick did not appear to study other texts. However, this is not an indication that Patrick did not study rhetoric, but that the rhetorical curriculum under these leaders focused on imitation of scripture, along with rhetorical exercises used to teach writing, and therefore maintain the tradition of rejecting pagan texts.

Indeed, Marilyn Dunn’s description of Lérins as a revered center of learning peopled with scholars who shunned worldly learning in favor of scripture corroborates this notion: “They [ecclesiastical scholars at Lérins] grasped Cassian’s identification of contemplation with scriptural study as an encouragement to transfer the skills they had learned as part of their secular education to the writing of sermons and the study of theology and scripture” (83). If Patrick did indeed study at this monastery, this provides an understanding of his thorough knowledge of scripture, as well as its implementation in his writings. Most importantly, Lérins was the most influential center of learning for the development of the art of letter writing: “Lerinese abbots and bishops cultivated the classical art of letter-writing” (Dunn 83). As will be discussed at length throughout the current study, refusal to study profane literature provides further evidence for Patrick’s imitation of Paul. Ronald F. Hock explains that Paul “self-consciously refused to incorporate worldly wisdom into his apostolic preaching (I Cor 2:1-4) and even considered himself a rank amateur when it came to rhetoric (2 Cor 11:6), the content and goal of much of the educational curriculum in the Greco-Roman world” (114). Hock goes on to

demonstrate the extent of Paul's rhetorical education despite such claims and despite Paul's simplicity of style and diction in the Epistles. Considering Dunn's description of the curriculum and practices at Lérins, it is likely that this is where Patrick received, as Ryan argues, the beginning of his education, an education in a rhetorical curriculum modeled upon the writings and teachings of Paul and the New Testament.

Furthering the thesis of scripture as Patrick's fundamental text in his rhetorical education, David Howlett has provided a comprehensive account of the use of rhetorical figures, such as Dronke cites, as well as biblical structure in St. Patrick's letter. In his work, *The Book of Letters of St. Patrick the Bishop*, Howlett analyzes the use of biblical style in Patrick's writings, particularly *chiasmus*, parallelism, and the Fibonacci sequence. The Fibonacci sequence is the mathematical arrangement of a literary composition. Howlett explains this phenomenon in medieval texts: "The patterns exhibit balance not only in the statement and restatement of ideas, but in the numbers of words and syllables and letters. These are arranged usually in one of two forms, either perfect symmetry or division by extreme and mean ration, the golden section" (18). In the medieval period, the world was conceived of as existing in perfect symmetry according to the laws and principles of geometry. Therefore, what one creates when one writes should mirror that which God has created in the universe. Howlett explains that this was a common feature of medieval letters: "The form of the *cursus* widely taught in the Middle Ages as part of the *ars dictaminis* required stressed rhythms which can be perceived as reflexes of these quantitative rhythms" (23). Howlett also claims that this was done with medieval readers in mind. The structure of the text, Howlett explains, utilizes antiphony in the pairing of statements, a common feature of the Latin bible, as well as internal *chiasmus* in the four



main body paragraphs (Howlett 40). Ultimately, the complicated structuring that Howlett suggests as a feature of the text is summarized thusly: “The 28 lines of Ch. 1 divide by extreme and mean ratio at 17 and 11. The 149 words of Ch. 1 divide by symmetry at the central seventy-fifth word, at the beginning of the crux at *di*” (94). Briefly, the epilogue and prologue link. While Howlett’s analysis is thorough and impressive in its complexity, it has met with much criticism as to its validity. For the sake of the current study, Howlett’s research does underline a certain level of complexity to Patrick’s writing. However, as with the work of many recent scholars, this analysis tells us how, but provides us with little in the way of the purpose and place of Patrick’s text.

More recently, Daniel F. Melia, in his “The Rhetoric of Patrick’s *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*,” has made the claim that his analysis of the letter supports “David Howlett’s phrasal reconstruction in its general outline, if not in every particular” (104). It is Melia’s contention that Patrick did indeed possess knowledge of canonical Epistles, as well as Quintilianic rhetoric, including *progymnasata*. Above it has been noted that Melia addresses claims that Patrick must not have been educated due to the poor quality of his prose. Melia points to audience awareness as determining Patrick’s rhetorical choices. He identifies twenty-six rhetorical figures in Patrick’s *Confessio*, arguing this is evidence for knowledge of Quintilianic rhetoric and at least some form of rhetorical training. As for Patrick’s letter, Melia identifies a number of tropes and figures, as well. The problem with such an analysis, however, is that a trope and figure hunt does not tell us much about the purpose and innovation of Patrick’s text. That Patrick uses rhetorical figures could point to classical learning, knowledge of the Church Fathers, or scriptural imitation, but

the historico-political context in which Patrick's text was disseminated tells us about rhetorical practice in the early medieval period.

It is also unclear whether the use of rhetorical figures was colloquial or idiomatic, rather than borrowed from the Roman tradition. For example, metonymy is commonly used in English, as in "The White House said today," and it is unlikely that those using it are consciously doing so. Melia's treatment of Patrick's letter as part of an epistolary tradition proves much more promising for an understanding of rhetorical practices. It is true, however, that in his analysis of Patrick's letter, Melia tends toward what Stowers warns against: a focus on the openings and closings of letters to the neglect of the body of the letter itself. Stowers discusses the problem with such an approach:

When Greek and Roman writers reflect on letter writing, they either discuss the 'body' or consider the letter as a functioning whole. Modern epistolary research has found very little to say about the body of the letter[...]Letters were classified into types according to typical situations and social contexts of letter writing. This meant classification according to typical purposes that letter writers hoped to accomplish. (23)

While Melia does take a step away from this type of analysis in his consideration of tropes and figures, that those features of the text find their origins in a Roman style education, or familiarity with Roman texts, cannot be determined with certainty for reasons discussed above. Certainly, the value of Patrick's *Epistola* comes in understanding the way epistolary forms were put to use in a specific socio-historical context. Melia's study is undoubtedly important as it places Patrick in a rhetorical context, and it does so by placing it firmly in the epistolary traditions of the Roman world.

While knowledge of Patrick's education has up until now been based upon conjecture and scant evidence, the *Epistola* itself provides much evidence for an education in early Christian rhetoric. Though Esposito and Smit may be correct in their claim that Patrick and Columbanus had no direct contact with classical texts, but rather learned classics second hand by way of the church fathers, this could never be a damning point for the student of rhetoric. This position would support that of Murphy and Kennedy; rhetoric of the early medieval period was a stagnant time of imitation and repetition, a break from the rich and varied classical tradition it is heir to, and the subsequent rich tradition of the twelfth century that it predates. Indeed, the early Christian rhetorical tradition is rich and little has been said of its nature and scope in the early medieval period. Patrick's letter demonstrates several conventions common to Greco-Roman epistolary, and especially as it was developed by Christian writers such as Paul. The categories and conventions of both Greco-Roman epistolary and early Christian epistolary are provided in the definitive text *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, by Stanley K. Stowers. In this extensive study of the epistolary manuals of antiquity, along with the letters themselves, Stowers provides a comprehensive framework for understanding early Christian letter writing. The most prominent figure in this period is, of course, Paul, whose letters in the New Testament, along with the *progymnastic* exercises Patrick was certainly exposed to during his time with the *grammaticus*, served as a model for Patrick's own.

## CHAPTER 3

## ARS DICTAMINIS

The extant letters of Patrick and Columbanus can be identified as the earliest evidence of a rhetorical tradition in Ireland. Most historians of rhetoric cite the true beginnings of the *ars dictaminis* to the middle of the eleventh century, beginning with Alberic of Monte Cassino in southern Italy. Prior to this, epistolary was an important means of communication and its conventions were passed on mainly by modeling and general formulae. The first mention of the *ars dictaminis* began with a short mention by Julius Victor in the fourth century A.D. (Perelman 97). Handbooks of rhetoric, with the exception of Demosthenes's *On Style* (§§ 223 – 225) do not discuss writing, as speech was privileged over writing by the likes of Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian (Kennedy 131). However, an art of letter writing had existed from “the earliest records of Western civilization” (Murphy 194). Both Murphy and Kennedy claim that, it was not until the fourth century CE that Julius Victor provided the first and albeit it brief treatment of *dictamen*. While Kennedy recognizes the increased significance of letter writing to the early Christian period, it is his contention that there was little in the way of innovative theory for the practice. Stowers, however, provides a discussion of numerous Greco-Roman epistolary handbooks that directly link the early Christian period and letter writing to rhetoric and demonstrate active theorizing: “Something about the movement of early Christianity made it a movement of letter writers” (15). This should be of great interest to the students of rhetoric and composition as this is the period in which writing became the privileged over the spoken word in rhetorical curriculum.

In the early Christian period, rhetorical theory and practice shifted not only due to changing socio-political contexts after the fall of the Empire, but also due to the expanding geo-political boundaries of the church, writing came to be a primary focus for early medieval scholars. Though both Kennedy and Murphy claim that epistolary theory and writing were not innovative objects of serious study in early medieval monastic curriculum, there are over 9,000 extant letters, including twenty-one out of twenty-seven writings in the New Testament that are written in letter form (Stowers 15). Aside from epistolary handbooks of Libanius (4<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.) and Demetrius of Phalerum (4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E.), Stowers cites numerous other classical authors both for their commentary on, and practice in, the epistolary genre, demonstrating that in no way was *ars dictaminis* not a prominent area of classical rhetoric until the writing of Julius Victor. At least, Murphy claims, no Roman rhetorician discussed *epistola* until Victor's brief discussion (195). Stowers argues that the art of letter writing was much more widely used, theorized, and complex than a treatment such as Murphy's might allow.

There are many socio-historical factors that led to the need for a rhetorical genre of letter writing. The concern for the rhetorical context of Patrick's letter lies in the early Christian period. The social and political changes following the decline of the Roman Empire led to a need for a formal art of letter writing as the church was growing and communication was needed between kingship polities and Rome. George Kennedy explains the results of these changes: "To help meet this need, medieval teachers developed a new kind of rhetorical instruction, the rhetorical art of letter writing known as *dictamen* (from Latin *dictare*, meaning to dictate a letter to a scribe)" (213). This art form was significant to the church as it expanded its reaches across Europe.

The definition of a letter, what it is and what purpose it is to serve, is an important aspect of the rhetorical art of letter writing. While a letter may be defined traditionally as any written correspondence between two or more individuals with the aim of communicating information or knowledge, Michael Trapp defines it as “a written message from one person (or set of people) to another, requiring to be set down in a tangible medium, which itself is to be physically conveyed from sender(s) to recipient(s)” (1). Sherly L. Forste-Grupp cites Ambrose’s definition of a letter: “‘The epistolary genre (genus) was devised in order that someone may speak to us when we are absent’” (Forste-Grupp 1). However, these definitions are overly simplistic and do not take into account the elaborate and multi-faceted rhetorical and literary purposes a letter might serve. Letters are to make present that which is absent, or, make it present in its absence. In this dialogic exchange, the interlocutor, or addressee, is physically absent, but present in another sense. Students of Derrida are familiar with the deconstruction of this binary, particularly in writing at large. Derrida’s deconstruction found its origins in response to Plato’s condemnation of rhetoric and writing, specifically that found in *Phaedrus*. It was Plato’s conceit that writing is secondary to speech in that writing supplements speech and is therefore a mere representation of thought, or *logos*. One cannot defend one’s thoughts and ideas in writing and therefore writing was potentially dangerous and misleading, unlike dialectic exchange, which Plato favored. Derrida, however, sees the spoken word as being guilty of the same thing as writing:

[...]I would like to demonstrate that the traits that can be recognized in the classical, narrowly defined concept of writing, are generalizable. They are valid not only for all orders of ‘signs’ and for all languages in general but

moreover, beyond semio-linguistic communication, for the entire field of what philosophy would call experience, even the experience of being: the above-mentioned ‘presence.’” (Derrida 1480-81)

This quote encapsulates Derrida’s conception of presence and absence in the deconstructive methodological framework. Within language, which is that in which all being is (language is what Heidegger calls “the house of being”), there is continual deferral as all presence is a supplementation of absence, the absence of a present moment that refuses to be, and that is supplemented by language. As with all language, written or spoken, letters demonstrate an assumption of the needs and nature of the audience, or the addressee. What the recipient(s) of the letter know, believe, think, and reject are all considerations of the letter writer, much as they are concerns of the *rhetor*. Therefore, the interlocutor in this written dialogue is inscribed in the text and is very much present in the exchange, even if only to the extent of the writer’s imagination. This, however, is true of all dialogic exchange to greater or lesser degrees.

Stowers provides room for such complexity in his definition of letters. Stowers argues that claiming letters merely communicate is problematic as contemporary interpreters “should resist the temptation to overlook the great multiplicity of only functions that letters performed and to speak ‘only of the communication of information’” (15). Stowers explains the use early Christian authors made of the rhetorical tradition in letter writing and other genres: “From the ancient rhetorical perspective, verbal formulas, rhetorical figures, methods of argumentation and so on could be used widely in various rhetorical genres” (23). In fact, such uses are what would come to define the different characteristics and types of letters in the early Christian period. The epistolary categories

drawn on in Patrick's own letter, to be discussed below, include *epideictic* (praise and blame), *paraenetic* ("[...]hortatory speech that does not admit of a counter-statement" (Stowers 94)), and *protreptic* ("[...] urges the reader to convert to a way of life; join a school, or accept a set of teachings as normative for the reader's life") (Stowers 113). While Melia's identification of rhetorical figures and tropes in Patrick's letter illustrate the extent of Patrick's education to a degree, these figures and tropes were used as part of a specific rhetorical genre that Patrick was consciously writing in. Therefore, we can understand better not only the sources of Patrick's writings, but their purpose and place in the much wider context of the early Christian rhetorical tradition.

St. Patrick's letter demonstrates that it was not always the case that letter writing served such a utilitarian function as communication. As Michael Trapp says of the function of letters in antiquity, "Letters are implicated in both life and literature, they can be both real and invented; indeed, they can be both 'real' and 'pretend' letters, either really sent, or never intended for sending, but meant from the start to be part of a literary work for a different kind of readership" (3). The extensive collection of letters composed by Cicero (914 survive and twice as many are believed to have existed) demonstrates an early interest in the art, as well as porous generic boundaries (Trapp 13-14). Horace was the first Latin writer to publish a collection of letters written in hexameter. Many of these letters took on a theme of didactic moralizing by way of imagined correspondence. These letters set the stage for another generation of Latin authors, including Ovid, whose writings were well known in the medieval period (Trapp 14). Ovid's epistolography was not only influenced by Horace, but also "the use of mythological themes in elementary school exercises and in declamatio is also part of their background" (Trapp 24). Figures



of speech, stylistics, and eulogy were all rhetorical devices that influenced *ars dictaminis*, and rhetorical training exercises, including *progymnasmata* and *declamatio*, helped to shape the form and content of *dictaminis*.

Considering that written correspondence was in many ways an extension of the dialogic philosophizing and moralizing common in antiquity from Plato on, *ethopoeia*, the art of constructing character, was another indication of the significance of rhetorical education in *ars dictaminis* (Trapp 32). Indeed, Trapp says that fourth and fifth century A.D. works on epistolary theory “pretty well guarantee that the properties of letter-writing featured to some extent in the curricula of *grammatistes* and *grammatikos* in the centuries A.D.” (38). All of this points to a Patrick who was well versed in literature and rhetoric, at the very least at the level of the *grammaticus*. Hock turns to Paul’s letters as evidence of his rhetorical training arguing that the Pauline Epistles “clearly point to an author who had received sustained training in composition and rhetoric” (209). Specifically, it is characterization, or *ethopoeia* in Paul’s Epistles that lead Hock to this conclusion. He writes

Composing letters was not the primary exercise for learning characterization, although the applicability of skills learned in this school exercise to letter-writing is nevertheless obvious, in that here, too, the letter writer had to express his character, his ethos, in response to a specific situation. (Hock 209)

Importantly, it was by way of modeling the New Testament, particularly Paul, that Patrick came to flourish as a writer in his own context as a lone bishop in early pagan Ireland. Moreover, rhetorical and critical analyses of the text support a thesis that argues

for a degree of complexity not only in Patrick's writings, but in early medieval monastic education, one that certainly looked to Pauline Epistles as a prime rhetorical model.

## CHAPTER 4

## LIBRI EPISTOLARUM SANCTI PATRICII EPISCOPI

The *Libri Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi*, the *Book of Letter of St. Patrick the Bishop*, is the name of the collection of writings of St. Patrick. Longest and most notable of these are the *Confessio* and the *Epistola ad milites Coroticus*. These two texts, along with other letters, were gathered together in the *Libri Epistolarum* sometime in the fifth or sixth century (Bieler 53). While these earliest manuscripts are not believed to have survived, the eight surviving manuscripts, the earliest dating to the eighth century, are believed to accurately represent the original, as the copies were not influenced by the romantic style of the early Bardic tradition in Ireland (Bieler 39). Concerning this matter, Ludwig Bieler argues,

The redactor, it would appear, abstained from interference not only with the contents of Patrick's letters, but also with their style. The endlessly protracted λέις ε ύπομένη (somewhat obscured by the punctuation of modern editors), the capricious, yet always uncomprehensible progress of ideas, the directness and warmth of expression, all this has unmistakably the personal touch of the extraordinary man. Even grammar and spelling, I think, were hardly touched.

(Bieler 39)

As Bieler is the foremost respected scholar on Patrick's writings, and as his edited edition of the primary manuscripts are considered the most authoritative, philological interpretation to this day, his argument here helps to set aside concerns that the manuscripts, in their various copies over several centuries, are tainted by the rhetorical, stylistic, grammatical, and thematic tendencies of redactor context. Considering the

propagandistic ends to which the early manuscripts were put by the hagiographers Muirchú and Tírechán in order to claim superiority for the ecclesiastical community at Armagh, that the *Libri Epistolarum* remained unchanged is remarkable.

The unaltered form of the manuscript also provides students of rhetoric with a valuable resource. Patrick's *Letter* implements *imitatio*, *progymnasmata*, *ethopoeia*, and conventional epistolary strategies, such as *epideictic*, *protreptic*, *paraphrasis*, and *paraenetic*, as well as circumscribed salutation (mentioning the name of the correspondent several times throughout the letter rather than at the beginning). Since little is known of rhetorical theory in the transition from the late Christian Roman era to the Carolingian Renaissance, Patrick's writings provide insight into the nature of rhetorical education, theory, and practice, especially the rhetorical genre of the letter. As was noted above, Patrick's writings were both practical and literary. Bieler says, "The apostle of Ireland was not a man of letters. He would set himself to write but occasionally and for some actual purpose. Like his great model, St. Paul, he would send letters to remote churches or even abroad when necessary" (Bieler 28). In this light, even Patrick's literary endeavor, the *Confessio*, served a rhetorical purpose: to establish character (*ethopoeia*), to defend his mission, and to reach a wide audience. Concerning the *Confessio* being distributed widely Bieler explains, "A number of copies were probably made simultaneously, and Patrick kept the autograph" (Bieler 28). Certainly, considerations of audience would require Patrick to draw on his experiences with the *grammaticus*, experience that would have included rhetorical training in the *progymnasmata* and other rhetorical exercises. For as A.B. Gwynn points out, both the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor* taught *progymnasmata*, as is evidenced in Quintilian (Gwynn 197; Kennedy 185).

Moreover, Hermogenes's *progymnasmata* were common in the early Middle Ages and influenced the composition of literature in Byzantine, homilies, histories, and hagiography (Kennedy 186 Secular...). Indeed, the Byzantine conservation of rhetoric in the form of late classical handbooks, such as Hermogenes, preserved sophistry (Kennedy 184). It is certain that *grammatici* were teaching rhetoric in the early medieval period, and it is therefore erroneous to suggest Patrick had no training.

The question still remains, however, as to why Patrick's Latin was so poor. Certainly, it is difficult to compare Patrick's "Letter" to those of Cicero or Horace. Patrick lacks ornamentation, his use of prose is often clumsy, and he demonstrates limited vocabulary. And, it is true that the ability to read and write letters effectively was essential to one's social standing (Trapp 42). Even considering the derision of Patrick's Latin that has marked contemporary scholarship, it is unlikely that Patrick's letters would have been received in kind in his own context. To begin, letters in antiquity and in the early medieval period were composed to be read aloud as silent reading as a practice had not yet been developed. It is significant that Patrick himself calls attention to the clumsiness of his prose early in the letter. The letter begins:

*Patricius peccator indoctus scilicet Hiberione constitutus episcopum me esse fateor. Certissime reor a Deo accepi id quod sum. Inter barbaras itaque gentes habito proselitus et profuga ob amorem Dei; testis est ille si ita est. Non quod optabam tam dure et tam aspere aliquid ex ore meo effundere; sed cogor zelo Dei, et ueritas Christi excitauit.*

I, Patrick, a sinner, naturally unlearned, placed in Ireland, I confess myself to be a bishop. I certainly think I receive without effort from

God that which I am. I dwell among barbarians and heathens and accordingly I am a proselyte, and a fugitive on account of God's love. He is the witness if that is so. Not because I was wishing so much a hard and so much a cruel essence to pour forth from my mouth, but I am compelled by the zeal of God the truth of Christ incites me.

(254,1.1-6)

From the very beginning of the "Letter," one gets a sense of what Bieler claims about Patrick; that is, Patrick only writes out of ecclesiastical duty (6). Immediately, there is concern for audience that is made apparent. The opening of this letter reveals the extent of Patrick's rhetorical training, as well features of letter writing as a rhetorical act.

The beginning of this letter demonstrates the use of the humility *topos* and *ethopoeia*. The humility *topos*, as Julius Schwietering claims, is developed in the discourse of St. Paul and St. Augustine. However, something akin to humility *topos* can be witnessed in Cicero in what is called *captatio benevolentiae*, "'capturing the good will' of the audience with the appearance of ignorance" (Taoka 2014). Schwietering says of medieval pious literature and liturgy that "Some of those who identify themselves add to their name the word 'priest.' As they indicate in the prayers with which they begin and end their poems, they stand before God as authors of their poems, together with their audience, in order to honor Him and to instruct their hearers" (1279). Patrick begins the letter "I, Patrick, a sinner, naturally unlearned, placed in Ireland, I confess myself to be a bishop." In confessing to be a bishop, Patrick indicates his subservience to God and his role in the writing of this letter. Patrick also makes of himself a model, an example of an ideal Christian, who in the tradition of St. Paul, has

given himself over to the Christian form of life, entirely to God, and in humility. This is an instance of *ethopoeia* as Patrick is establishing his character as a humble, subservient, follower of Christ, and in doing so imitates St. Paul. Schwietering explains,

St. Paul puts the duty of becoming the "servus Jesu Christi" before every Christian, for whom freedom means not individual freedom but humble submission to Christ's will. Paul, who boasts of his weakness (*infirmitas*), was to the Middle Ages a model of deepest humility. Bernard of Clairvaux, who places the Apostle beside David in his humble awareness of his sins (*Cantica*, Sermo 34), sees embodied in him the highest degree of humility, because he not only bears with patience the humiliation of his weakness, but boasts of it. (1281)

To boast of one's humility seems contradictory, but this is an important aspect of early Christian literature. By doing so, Patrick holds himself to the highest standard of humility.

Patrick further adheres to these conventions when he writes, "Not because I was wishing so much a hard and so much a cruel essence to pour forth from my mouth, but I am compelled by the zeal of God the truth of Christ incites me." This "hard" and "cruel essence" pouring forth from his mouth (presumably as he dictates what is to be written to a scribe) further establishes his humble character and is in sharp contrast with description of great orators in the classical era. The pouring and flowing of words like honey is a common metaphor for rhetoric throughout its history. Cicero, often referred to as "honey-tongued Cicero," is only one example among many of the metaphor of words pouring forth like honey from the *rhetor's* mouth. Considering this, is it that Patrick was aware of exemplary rhetoricians and their speeches but was incapable of producing them himself? It seems more likely that the "cruel essence" pouring forth from his mouth is a conscious

rhetorical move steeped in Christian rhetorical practices witnessed in the Pauline Epistles and reflected in Patrick's writings.

Not only is Patrick's apparent "rusticity" evidence of a Christian rhetorical practice, but must also lie in the nature of Patrick's audience. The role of addressee in both spoken and written language is a complicated topic. Certainly, there is an intended audience in most communication. The title of Patrick's letter might suggest Coroticus and his soldiers were the intended audience of the letter. However, if we accept that Patrick's letter is a conscious rhetorical and literary text, the intended audience must have been much wider than Coroticus and his soldiers. As was noted above, even in the Hellenistic and Hellenic ages, letters were frequently rendered as literary objects intended to be appreciated as such by a wide audience.

The publication of collections of letters as literary objects was quite common in the antique period. It is also true that various types of letters, categorized by Trapp according to the presumed intention of the author, existed throughout antiquity and as I argue here, in the early medieval period. For example, Trapp explains that there are several categories of letters distinguished by their audience. There are those composed by actual historical individuals that were intended to be sent to actual historical individuals and that were not copied and distributed widely (Trapp 37). Other letters were assigned fictitious authorship and were sent to fictitious characters (Trapp 37). This type is a clear example of the literary value ascribed to epistolary. There are varying combinations of these characteristics witnessed in other letters, as well. Ben Witherington the III suggests that New Testament letters were not really letters in the sense of written correspondence. Considering the profound influence of the Pauline letters on Patrick's writing, it is clear



that this understanding of epistolary endured in the early medieval period. Witherington says of New Testament letters, “Actually they are *not mainly letters*, although they have epistolary openings and closings sometimes. They are discourses, homilies, and rhetorical speeches of various sorts that the creators could not deliver personally to a particular audience, so instead they sent a surrogate to proclaim them” (9). Once again, the theme of supplementarity and the primordial nature of writing are revealed as an important aspect of early Christian understanding. The culture of early Ireland, like the Antique period, was an oral culture. There was no orthographic system for early Irish at this time. Therefore, even if there were a laity with a basic understanding of Latin, it is unlikely that many were at all literate. Moreover, this type of letter is common today in the Catholic Church and is often read to the laity during the homily. It is very likely that Patrick’s letter served this purpose in the early church (Wiley). Whether the messenger translated the letter on the spot, or read the Latin to an audience, it is without a doubt that this document was intended to be read aloud. Witherington explains,

This would have been almost a necessity because the document would come without division of words or punctuation, so only someone skilled in reading such seamless prose in scriptum continuum – indeed, one who already knew the contents of the document – could place the emphases in the right places so as to communicate the message effectively. (9)

Here, Witherington describes the nature of Latinate texts prior to the invention of silent reading. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind Agamben’s description of the relationship between writing and orality in this period. To have read the letter aloud was to make present not only the *logos* of Patrick, but in the recitation of scripture, to make

present the *logos* of God. This was a powerful innovation of the art of rhetoric in the Late Antique Christian era.

Undoubtedly, Patrick's letter was a rhetorical discourse meant to be read aloud, or dictated, to a wide audience. Trapp describes this type of letter in relation to his taxonomy of epistolary style: "letters by and to historical individuals, but never physically sent as individual items in letter mode, because intended from the start more for a broader readership than for the specified addressee" (3). Considering evidence from the letter thus far, it is clear that Patrick's letter was indeed addressed to a much wider audience than only Coroticus and his soldiers. Stowers says such letters are common to the early Christian period and that they are not private, but "they are public (meant for publication or a wider audience), literary, conventional, and artful and are written for austerity" (18). While the crux of the argument against evidence of Patrick's education is his lackluster artfulness, one could claim that awareness of his audience in a pre-literate Ireland informed stylistic decisions. As a self-proclaimed proselyte, a wish to reach a wider audience, one familiar with the actions of Coroticus and with the Christian faith, would also seem likely. If this is the case, then Patrick's letter seems to have been written according to a rather complex understanding of its potential audience.

Establishing the audience of Patrick's letter helps to elucidate its *epideictic*, *paraenetic*, and *protreptic* functions and features. In order to fully explicate this, we must take a look at the socio-historical context of Patrick's writing. E. A. Thompson has written on this issue of audience through elucidation of the historico-political context of Patrick's Ireland and a sketch of the historical Coroticus. Scholars have generally agreed that Coroticus was a fifth century, Christian king from Briton, living among the Picts in

southern Scotland. Thompson argues, however, that considering Patrick's familiarity with Coroticus, as well as his attempt to reach him by letter, that it is more likely that Coroticus was a Briton living in Ireland (21). In the fifth century, Ireland's political landscape consisted of a multitude of *túatha* (petty kingdoms/tribes) with little stability. Raiding and slavery were a fact of life and it is likely, argues Thompson, that Coroticus, leading a band of raiders, was resident in northeast Ireland. Thompson also suggests that Patrick's letter would leave one to believe that Coroticus was, at least to a degree, admired by those in his territory, and as noted above, was a Christian (27). In this respect, Patrick can be seen as not only admonishing of the actions of Coroticus, but of a way of life common to this socio-historical context. This supports the claim that Patrick's letter was indeed intended for a much wider audience than Coroticus and his soldiers. Thompson points out that even though the letter is written in Latin, this does not discount a wide audience. In the fifth century, there was still no orthographic system in place for Old Irish. Also, Latin was the language of the church. Thompson argues,

Latin must have been familiar to some at least of the Christians, especially the British Christians, who lived in Ireland even before Patrick arrived there. Does it follow that Coroticus himself could understand or even read Latin? Patrick instructs his messenger, not to hand over his letter to the tyrant or to his men, but to read it aloud 'before all the peoples and in the presence of Coroticus.' (25)

One would think this a dangerous move, as well. For Patrick's instructions were not only to deliver this letter to Coroticus and read it to him, but to share this message with the surrounding territories and with all who would listen. As was the case in Antiquity, the letter's reader would have been distinct from the letter's audience. The reader would have

likely been a *lector* who would read the letter to an illiterate audience (Witherington 9). Presumably, Patrick was the leading ecclesiastic in Ireland, holding the position of bishop, and as Coroticus was presumably Christian, as Thompson claims, then Patrick's letter was a part of a "propaganda tour" (Thompson 25) through Coroticus's territories. That the learned messenger translated the letter, on the spot, to the Christian people of these territories is likely (25).

Patrick directly addresses this issue of audience in the letter:

*Manu mea scripsi atque condidi uerba ista danda et tradenda, militibus mittenda Corotici, non dico ciuibus meis neque ciuibus sanctorum Romanorum sed ciuibus daemoniorum, ob mala opera ipsorum. Ritu hostile in morete uiuunt, socii Scottorum atque Pictorum apostatarumque. Sanguilentos sanguinare de sanguine innocentium Christianorum, quos ego in numero Deo genui atque in Christo confirmaui!*

I write by my hand. I put words together that are to be delivered, to be handed down and to be sent to the soldiers of Coroticus. I am not talking to the citizens of holy Romans, but to the evil citizens for their evil works, for their living an hostile enemy's way of life in death. Allies of the Irish, and of the Picts, and of the apostates. Blood stained men, bloodied from the blood of innocent Christians, whom I converted to Christ in number and whom I confirmed in Christ. (254.2.10-15)

"*Manu mea scripsi*" is a trope in letter writing suggesting dedication and intimacy. Also, here Patrick uses four different words to describe the intended fate of the letter: *scribo*, "I write"; *condo*, "I put together, to author"; *do*, "I deliver"; *trado*, "I hand down, send."

Patrick writes, he authors, a letter that is to be delivered, to be sent, or, handed down. This last translation of *trado* is significant. One sends a letter, but one hands down wisdom, or advice. The two translations mean significantly different things. If we take *trado* here to mean “hand down,” rather than send, then this may provide evidence internal to the text itself suggesting that the audience of the letter would have likely been those listening to mass. The effectiveness of the humility *topos* becomes more acute in this light. For a pious and self righteous man of God condemning the actions of a king would be less effective rhetorically than a humble servant of God condemning the atrocities brought upon the innocent by an evil earthly ruler. This also may be an explanation for the simplicity of Patrick’s Latinity. To reach a wider audience in a pre-literate society, the grandiose rhetorical style used in much ecclesiastical correspondence would have proven ineffective. One must note, despite intentional simplicity, in this passage we see the use of *figura etymologica*, the use of several different forms of a single root: *sanguilentos*, *sanguinare*, and *sanguine* (Melia 98). While Patrick’s Latin is simple, it is not ignorant. As a determined proselyte, Patrick hands down the wisdom of Christ to all those who will listen or read and in a manner that will be accessible to the widest audience possible.

## CHAPTER 5

PATRICK AND PAUL: IMITATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN EARLY  
MONASTIC RHETORICAL EDUCATION AND ARS DICTAMINIS

Among the reasons for the scholarly neglect of early medieval rhetorical practices is an assumed lack of originality and innovation in rhetorical theory, as well as a shifting socio-political context that no longer required civic debate. Writing became a more important cultural practice. The conception of discourse and discourse practices in the early medieval period as lack luster neglects theories of language in Antiquity and the early medieval period: “This distinction [original v. unoriginal] was obviously less important to the ancients. They did not place the same value on originality. To them, an author does not invent his text but merely arranges it; the content of the text exists first, before being laid down in writing” (Karel van der Toorn qtd. in Witherington 33). However, as Agamben argues, in the early monastic tradition, there was a sense of the primordial nature of written texts; the written text supplements *logos* in that within the written word lays the living word of God. (One may think here of the account given by Plato in *The Phaedrus* of the inscription upon the soul which flies near the sun. The writing is as eternal as the soul and supplements the experience of heightening spiritual awareness (*Phaedrus* 246a – 251a)). For Patrick, the Pauline letters possessed a timeless truth. What is original and innovative about Patrick’s letter is his use of sections of the Pauline letters in application to his own rhetorical context.

It was not just that he may have seen parallels between Paul’s context and his own; it was that Paul’s truth applied to Patrick’s own mission. The composition of Patrick’s letter, including his incorporation of Paul’s letters, demonstrates awareness of

several *progymnasmatic* exercises as they are described by Aelius Theon, including *paraphrasis* (paraphrase), *diêgêma* (narrative), *ekphrasis* (ecphrasis, description), *synkrisis* (comparison), and *thesis*. Importantly, this use of sections of *progymnasmata* and the Pauline letters, as well as the rhetorical strategies of those letters, reveal something of the early medieval monastic curriculum in rhetoric. It should be noted at this juncture that there is scholarly debate over the authorship of several of the Pauline Epistles. However, the rhetorical consistency of that which has traditionally been labeled “Pauline” is such that, for the purposes of this study, it proves a useful analytic framework to work from. After all, it is doubtless that Patrick and his contemporaries would have considered these letters as authentically the work of Paul. Patrick’s letter provides evidence suggesting that indeed, early monastic rhetorical education consisted of study of the New Testament in place of profane literature. This is a significant change from the pedagogical practices of the Late Antique Period. However, it is the contention of this study that *declamatio*, *progymnasmata*, and other rhetorical exercises from antiquity were still taught in the early Medieval period; it is the texts that served as the center of study that changed. Moreover, it is Stower’s contention that the *progymnasmata* often included letter writing in the secondary level of education with the *grammaticus* (34; 79). The art of letter writing was an innovation in the early medieval period and Patrick’s letter demonstrates the influence of classical rhetoric on *ars dictaminis*.

The profound influence of the Pauline letters on Patrick’s letter can be witnessed in the opening, which closely parallels Pauline epistolary form and technique as described by Stowers. He explains Paul’s adaptation of epistolary opening to different rhetorical situations: “he expands his name as sender into a summary of the gospel and a

statement of his calling to be an apostle to all the gentiles” (Stowers 21). As noted above, Patrick begins the letter with the humility *topos* and *ethopoeia*, sketching his own character in order to establish a religious relationship with his audience. That Patrick is doing this is quite clear as in this opening Patrick speaks only of himself. Further on in the opening, we see these rhetorical strategies developed, along with *paraenetic*, *protreptic*, and *epideictic*. These rhetorical features of letter writing often overlap, but this rhetorical analysis will consider each in its own right from several sections of Patrick’s letter that stand out as the most rhetorically significant. We will first look at *paraenetic*, which according to Stowers “includes not only precepts but also such things as advice, supporting argumentation, various modes of encouragement and dissuasion, the use of examples, models of conduct, and so on” (23). *Epideictic* is commonly seen in *paraenetic* letters and *epideictic* in the New Testament can often take the form of the praise of God. Since one could speak of Paul as he who boasts of his own humility, one could also claim that in the early Christian period, especially in the art of letter writing, praise of oneself became commonplace. Even though God bestowed all of the greatness bestowed upon oneself, it was, nevertheless, bestowed upon oneself.

Turning again to the opening of Patrick’s letter, we will analyze his use of the Pauline letters, highlighting examples of *epideictic* and *paranesis* and their scriptural parallels. After the initial opening line cited above, “I, Patrick, am a sinner, naturally unlearned, placed in Ireland, confess myself to be a bishop,” Patrick continues:

“*Certissime reor a Deo accepi id quod sum*” ‘With certainty, I receive from God that which I am’ (*Liber Secundus* 254,1.2). This phrase is witnessed in 1 Corinthians 15:10: “*gratia autem Dei sum id quod sum*” ‘By the grace of God, I am who I am.’ Patrick



models Paul and once again employs *ethopoeia* to begin the letter. Patrick continues this *ethopoeia* as he alludes to Cain in Genesis 4:12: “*Inter barbaras ita que gentes habito proselitus et profuga ob amorem Dei est ille si ita est*” ‘I dwell among barbarians and accordingly, I am a proselyte and a fugitive on account of God’s love. He is the witness that this is so’ (254, 1.5). The parallel in Genesis is as follows, “*cum operatus fueris eam non dabit tibi fructus suos vagus et profugus eris super terram*” ‘When you shall till it, it will not yield to you its fruit: you will be a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth’ (Genesis 4:12). This phrasing, “fugitive” and “vagabond,” is again repeated in Genesis 4:14. Patrick paraphrases (*paraphrasis*) Genesis and shapes the discourse to work in his rhetorical context in identifying himself as a “proselyte and a fugitive,” as Patrick is not necessarily being punished for sins, as was Cain, but has been commanded by God to spread the good news. It is important to note that in monastic rule and life, suffering for God was an ideal to be attained. Melia identifies the opening of this letter as a use of humility *topos* revealing Patrick’s employment of rhetorical figures in the tradition of Cicero and Quintilian. However, the modeling of the *Vetus Latina*, a collection of Latin translations of the Bible of which there is no one standard version, or the Latin Vulgate New Testament (further studies are necessary in order to determine which version Patrick was using, and it is not certain that such studies would lead to consensus) is more likely indicative of a changing rhetorical curriculum in early British monasteries. While the humility *topos* is undoubtedly present in the letter’s opening, it is used as a means to *ethopoeia*. These rhetorical strategies, in turn, are employed as paraenetic, as a means of dissuading the actions of the soldiers of Coroticus, the laity, and all who would listen, and to encourage a Christian form of life.

Later in the opening of the letter, Patrick continues to establish his character and to hold it up as a model of behavior for his audience.

*Non quod optabam tam dure et tam aspere aliquid ex ore meo effundere;  
sed cogor zelo Dei, et ueritas Christi excitauit, pro dilectione proximorum  
atque filiorum, pro quibus tradidi patriam et parentes et animam meam  
usque ad mortem. Si dignus sum, uiuo Deo meo docere gentes etsi  
contempnor aliquibus*

It is not because I was wishing such a hard and such a cruel essence to pour forth from my mouth, but I am compelled by the zeal of God; the truth of Christ has incited me for love of neighbors and sons, for which I have given up my native land, parents, my life, even until my death. If I am worthy, I live for my God, even though I may be held in low esteem by some. (254, 1.5-9)

Strung artfully together in prose are allusions to and borrowings from the Pauline Epistles. First, note again the humility *topos* in speaking of the “hard and cruel essence to pour forth from my mouth.” As noted above, this clearly demonstrates awareness of *elocutio* and *dictio* in that Patrick openly compares his style and diction to that of *rheto*rs. When Patrick says “I am compelled by the zeal of God” he alludes to 2 Corinthians 11:10 and Romans 10:9: “*es ueritas Christi in me*” ‘the truth of Christ is in me’ (2 Cor 11:10) and “*quia si confitearis in ore tuo Dominum Iesum et in corde tuo credideris quod Deus illum excitauit ex mortuis saluus eris*” ‘For if you confess with your mouth to the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved’ (Romans 10:9). Here, *paraenesis* is witnessed in the Pauline letters and henceforth in

Patrick's letter and in this way Patrick also establishes credibility. Stowers notes the prevalence of *ethopoeia* in *paraenetic* letters: "Sometimes letter writers also appeal to living examples, including examples of the author's own behavior that may be set forth for imitation" (95). Patrick appeals to his example, having, like Paul, given up all of his worldly possessions and ties to the earthly realm to carry God's word to them. Patrick establishes his character as a model for his followers and for the soldiers of Coroticus and in doing so clearly paraphrases and models the Pauline letters.

The final section of the opening alludes to 2 Corinthians 5:14. Patrick says, "the truth of Christ incites me for love of neighbors and sons, for which I have given up my native land, parents, my life, even until my death if I am worthy." The scripture this passage paraphrases is as follows: "*caritas enim Christi urget nos*" "For the charity of Christ incites us" (2 Cor 5:14). Invoking this passage, Patrick speaks of himself as one of "*nos*," as "one of us," that is, the prophets like Paul who have given up their earthly lives to spread the Good News. Patrick has given up everything, and he also risks the rapprochement of those he has given up everything for. This is important in establishing his character and credibility for an audience who may suffer similar persecutions for turning away from their native social customs, which we may see Coroticus as a representative of, and following the model set forth in *ethoepeia* and *paranesis* in the opening of the letter.

The opening of Patrick's letter establishes character and credibility, while the second section establishes the intended audience and the character of the subject of the *epideictic*: Coroticus. It is in this section that the influence of *ecphrasis* and *thesis* are witnessed. In an admonishing tone, Patrick addresses the letter to Coroticus and his

soldiers, condemning them for the slaughter of innocent Christians, who were presumably under Patrick's protection. The second section reads:

*Manu mea scripsi atque condidi uerba ista danda et tradenda militibus mittenda Corotoci. Non dico ciuibus sanctorum Romanorum sed ciuibus daemoniorum ob mala opera ipsorum Ritu hostile in morte uiuunt Socii Scottorum atque Pictorum apostatarum(que) sanguilentos sanguinare de sanguine innocentim Xpistianorum quos ego innumerum numerum Deo genui atque in Xpisto confirmaui*

I write by my hand words that are to be delivered, to be handed down and to be sent to the soldiers of Coroticus. I am not talking to the citizens of holy Romans, but to the evil citizens for their evil works, for their living an enemy's way of life in death, allies of the Irish and the Picts and of the apostates. Blood stained men, bloodied from the blood of innocent Christians, whom I begot to God in great numbers and whom I confirmed in Christ also. (274, 10.2-14)

Patrick begins by stating that he has written the letter himself, by his own hand, which established his character and appeals to *ethos*. Oliver Davies explains the significance of this declaration: "writing with one's own hand carries with it a notion of special authority such as that conveyed by Paul at the end of his letters" (491). Davies points out four examples of similar declarations in Paul: "*videte qualibus litteris scripsi vobis mea manu*" 'behold a letter I have written to you by my own hand' (Gal 6:110); "*salutatio mea manu Pauli*" 'The salutation of Paul by my own hand' (Col 4:18); "*salutatio mea manu Pauli quod est signum in omni epistula ita scribo*" 'The salutation of Paul, by my own hand,

which is the sign of an Epistle. So I write” (2 Thes 3:17); “*ego Paulus scripsi mea manu*” ‘I, Paul, have written this by my own hand’ (Phlm 19). The opening of the second section further demonstrates Patrick’s awareness of epistolary conventions in the New Testament. In doing this, Patrick establishes credibility with his Christian audience. Announcing that he has written the letter himself establishes authority with his pagan audience, as well, as the ability to write was a mark of power. The employment of this convention demonstrates Patrick’s rhetorical awareness and further points to the New Testament as the primary text used for rhetorical study.

The *progymnasmatic* elements of this section are *ecphrasis* and *thesis*. *Thesis* is distinguished from *topos* in Aelius Theon’s text. This distinction is made in large part for pedagogical purposes, as students were intended to create *topos* for an intended audience of the law court, while *thesis* was intended for assembly or a public lecture (Kennedy 55). Theon’s *progymnasmatic* exercises explain the latter: “Now the most general headings of practical theses are supported by argument from what is necessary and what is noble and what is beneficial and what is pleasant, and refuted from the opposites” (Kennedy 56). The text continues,

From the opposite (we argue as follows): if the opposite should not be done, this should be done; and if the opposite is shameful, this is noble; and if that is inexpedient, this is beneficial[...]A more advanced student should include in each of the topics just mentioned the evidence of famous men, poets and statesmen and philosophers. (Kennedy 57)

Patrick’s own refutation from the opposite takes the holy Romans and the pagans as the point of comparison: “I am not talking to the citizens of holy Romans, but to the evil

citizens for their evil works, their living an enemy's way of life in death, allies of the Irish and the Picts and of the apostates." To live an "enemy's way of life" to whom? Clearly, to the Irish people and most definitely to the Christian community in Ireland. Holding up the way of life of Coroticus, and considering the socio-political landscape of early medieval Ireland, of many of Ireland's inhabitants, as something to be severely admonished brings forth the way of life that Patrick champions: the Christian way of life. In this section, the *progymnasmatic* exercise of *thesis* is utilized skillfully alongside Christian models.

Along with *thesis*, *ecphrasis* is demonstrated in this section of Patrick's letter. Theon's explanation of this exercise is as follows:

Ecphrasis is descriptive language, bringing what is portrayed clearly before the sight. There is ecphrasis of persons and events and places and periods of time. An instance of ecphrasis of persons is, for example, the Homeric line (*Odyssey* 19.246, of Eurybates), 'Round-shouldered, swarthy-skinned, woolly-haired[...].' (Kennedy 45)

Patrick's knowledge of this rhetorical exercise is witnessed here: "Blood stained men, bloodied from the blood of innocent Christians, whom I begot to God in great numbers and whom I confirmed in Christ also." The image of the blood stained soldiers brings a barbarous image before the sight of the listener/reader. The argument from the opposite continues here as Patrick makes clear that the blood these soldiers are stained with is that of "innocent Christians" who were slaughtered. This passage is admonishing of the actions of the pagan warriors and embedded in this admonishment is praise of Patrick's own way of life: leading innocents into the Christian way of life. The *progymnasmatic*

exercises are used toward the end of converting more Irish to this new, Christian way of life, while admonishing the way of life of the petty warlords that dotted the socio-political landscape of early Ireland. Interestingly, this ancient rhetorical knowledge is seen working with what was innovative content in the form of the New Testament Epistles.

After this passage, Patrick alludes to Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei* and, once again, the Pauline letters. This section of Patrick's letter can be identified as *protreptic*, a rhetorical letter that Stowers defines: "*Protreptic* works urge the reader to convert to a way of life, join a school, or accept a set of teachings as normative for the reader's life...If the author believes that the uninitiated must overcome a serious moral character problem...admonition, censure, or rebuke might play a central role" (113). When Patrick says "I am not talking to the citizens of holy Romans, but to the evil citizens for their evil works, their living an enemy's way of life in death, allies of the Irish and the Picts and of the apostates" he uses different forms of the word *ciues*, "citizens." This word, however, has a special connotation in Latin. Davies explains, "The basic idea he [Patrick] wished this word to convey is a notion of alliance with others. This notion of being a fellow citizen with the servants of God or the Devil is an important motif in the development of Latin theology, as in Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei*, and has Eph 2:19 as its basic text" (491). Since the end of Patrick's persuasion was to ultimately strengthen and grow the Christian community in Ireland by teaching Christian values and form of life, establishing those who associate with the likes of Coroticus as a part of the community of the devil is a powerful rhetorical move.

By admonishing, or to use the phraseology of epideictic rhetoric, “blaming” Coroticus and his soldiers, Patrick establishes for his audience the correct way of living a Christian life. In referring to the “citizens of Holy Romans,” Patrick is paraphrasing, once again, the Pauline Epistles: “*ergo iam non estis hospites et advenae sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei*” ‘Now you are no longer strangers and foreigners. Now you are fellow citizens with the saints and those of the household of God’ (Eph 2:19). Giving recent converts this sense of belonging to the Christian community, especially by way of allusion to Paul, “praises” them for their conversion and holds them up above the pagan warriors. This sentence is a clear example of *epideictic* and also reveals its *protreptic* nature, for Patrick is admonishing the soldiers, or those who would adhere to the pagan, social system, in order to urge them to convert to the Christian form of life of which Patrick and his family of Christians are the representatives.

*Protreptic* is also particularly prevalent later on in the letter after Patrick pleads with his audience not to live like Coroticus and his soldiers. Again, Patrick delineates his role and the separation of the communities of the Christian converts and the wicked soldiers:

*Et si mei me non cognoscunt, propheta in patria sua honorem non habet.*

*Forte non sumus ex uno ouili neque unum Deum patrem habemus, sicut ait: Qui non est mecum contra me est, et qui non congregat mecum spargit.*

*Non conuenit: Vnus destruit, alter aedificat. Non quaero quae mea sunt*

And if my people do not know me, for a prophet has no honor in his native land. By fortune [Christians and Coroticus’s soldiers] are not one and the same and we do not have the same God the Father. We are not one: As He



says whomever is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather in my congregation scatters. One destroys, another builds. I am not questioning what things are mine. (274, 11-20)

In this passage, there are seven allusions to scripture, further demonstrating the scripture was the sole text of study in early monastic rhetorical curriculum. When Patrick says, “we do not have the same God the father” he is echoing Ephasians: “*unus Deus et Pater omnium qui super omnes et per omnia et in omnibus nobis*” ‘One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all’ (Eph 4.6). Once again, the Pauline Epistles serve as the model. This passage also demonstrates *synchrisis* in the clear comparison of those who follow the Christian God, and those who follow the pagan gods, those who build, and those who destroy, etc. *Protrepitic* is again witnessed here in further admonishment of those who would follow Coroticus. It is the murderous heathen soldiers that destroy while Patrick has built the community of Christians in Ireland. Patrick continues to model the Pauline Epistles in his own and to employ the classical rhetorical strategies that were integrated into the art of letter writing.

The *epideictic* rhetorical strategy is witnessed most clearly and powerfully in a later passage in which Patrick admonishes the pagan peoples for their practice of slavery and their murderousness. As Patrick tells us early in the letter, as a boy he was captured as a slave by marauders such as Coroticus. It is understandable that Patrick, missionary concerns aside, would have looked upon this practice with such disdain. Patrick paints a picture of Coroticus and his men that is admonitory and furthers the letter’s *protrepitic* nature:

*Quis sanctorum non horreat iocundare uel conuiuium frueri cum talibus?  
De spoliis defunctorum Christianorum repleuerunt domos suas, de rapinis  
uiuunt. Nesciunt miseri uenenum letale cibum porrigunt ad amicos et filios  
suos, sicut Eua non intellexit quod utique mortem tradidit uiro suo. Sic  
sunt omnes qui male agunt: mortem perennem poenam operantur.*

Who among the saints would not be horrified of enjoyment and celebration with such a kind? With the spoils of dead Christians, they fill their homes; they live from plundering. Ignorant, miserable, venomous, mortal, they spread poisonous food to their loved ones and sons, as Eve did not understand what poison she delivered to her husband. All those who are evil do this. They work toward the penalty of eternal death. (256, 13.4-9)

*Protrepic* is enhanced with distinct *synchrisis*, and the scathing rapprochement is adorned with the language of the New Testament. In a string of adjectives describing the evil nature of the marauders and their behaviors, Patrick uses *miser* (wretched, miserable, unhappy, pitiable, unfortunate), *venenum* (poison, venom), and *letalis* (lethal, fatal, mortal). They are characterized as ignorant fools spreading “poisonous food” to their loved ones. This metaphor finds its origins in Genesis as Eve, persuaded by Lucifer, eats of the apple of knowledge and entices Adam to do the same. Yet, in the invocation of this metaphor, Patrick persuades new and old converts alike of the seriousness of these misdeeds. Paraphrased in the very end of this passage is 2 Cor 7:10: “*quae enim secundum Deum tristitia est paenitentiam in salutem stabilem operatur saeculi autem tristitia mortem operator*” ‘For the sorrow that is according to God works penance,

steadfastly leading to salvation: but the sorrow of the world works death.’ Once again, paraphrase is seen here as a conscious use of a rhetorical exercise, rather than evidence of Patrick’s bad memory or poor access to legitimate texts. This is clear in Patrick’s explicit use of a contemporary literary and rhetorical genre, the use of which he was necessarily trained in. The use of this genre and of the New Testament provide insight into the nature of the early monastic rhetorical curriculum.

In the next passage, *synchrisis*, *pathos*, and *paraphrasis* lend to the *protreptic* nature of the letter. These rhetorical strategies of the *progymnasmata* are, once again, incorporated alongside the scripture and adapted to the specific rhetorical context at hand. Patrick writes:

Consuetudo Romanorum Gallorum Christianorum: mittunt uiros sanctos idoneos ad Francos et ceteras gentes cum tot milia solidorum ad redimendos captiuos baptizatos. Tu potius interficis et uendis illos genti exterarum ignoranti Deum; quasi in lupanar tradis membra Christi. Qualem spem habes in Deum, uel qui te consentit aut qui te communicat uerbis adulationis? Deus iudicabit. Scriptum est enim: Non solum facientes mala sed etiam consentientes damnandi sunt.

The tradition of the Roman Christians of Gaul: To send off capable, consecrated men to the Franks and the other (pagan) peoples with such a sum so as to buy back the baptized captives. You rather destroy and sell these Christians to a foreign people who are ignorant of God, as though you were handing over the members of Christ to a brothel. What sort of hope do you have in God? Or who could consent to you? Or who could

lavish kind words upon you? God will judge you. As it is written: ‘Not only those who do evil, but even those who go along with it need to be condemned.’ (257,14.10-17)

The comparison as set forth in this passage is in striking concordance with that given by Hermogenes in his account of the *progymnasmata*: “Syncrisis is a comparison of similar or dissimilar things, or of lesser things to greater or greater things to lesser. Syncrisis has been included in common-place, where we amplify the misdeeds by comparison[...] (Kennedy 83). Patrick begins by explaining the practice condoned by the Roman Gauls, i.e., the ecclesiastics, and uses this as the point of comparison to admonish the actions of Coroticus and his soldiers, and as has been established, pagan Irish socio-political practices at large. The image of innocent Christians, newly baptized, being sold into slavery or murdered provides a stunning appeal to *pathos*. This being followed by questions put directly to the audience makes for a powerful rhetorical moment. Finally, the paraphrase at the end of the segment strikes fear (*pathos*) into the minds of those listening to a learned *lectio* revealing the words of the holy man, Patrick. Once again, the source of this paraphrase is Paul.

The Latin Vulgate version of 1 Cor 6:15 paraphrased above reads: “*nescitis quoniam corpora vestra membra Christi sunt tollens ergo membra Christi faciam membra meretricis absit*” ‘Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Should I take the members of Christ and make them a whore?’ The use of this paraphrase is more complex and meaningful in this context than an initial interpretation of its pathetic appeal may allow. Davies describes the import of this scriptural allusion and paraphrase in the context of the Christian tradition:

The image is based upon Paul...whose words ‘members of Christ’ are quoted; however, Patrick does not see the members of Christ being handed over to a person, but being handed into a place: in lupanar. This word for a brothel carries with it some very strong images. First, it comes from a figurative word for a prostitute, lupa, which literally means ‘a she-wolf’ and so the image of the parts of Christ’s body being devoured in an evil place is conjured up. Second, this word is used in the scriptures in Latin to describe the places where the Israelites pursued foreign gods and as a result of their dealing with these places they had to face punishment. Thus Coroticus’s behavior is in keeping with his status as an apostate. (494)

This lengthy passage is worth quoting in full as Davies gives an explanation for the import of Patrick’s diction, which is clearly far from rustic and unlearned. Rather, it is clear that Patrick was trained in a rhetorical curriculum which valued classical rhetorical exercises and in which the New Testament was the standard text of writing instruction. There is no other explanation for Patrick’s profound understanding of the import of word choices in Latin, which was not his native tongue. Grammatical instruction, which was closely tied and often times overlapped with rhetorical instruction, was conducted in Latin. Being from Briton, and having been enslaved during his most formative years, Patrick would have been a student of Latin grammar and rhetoric right up until the time of his appointment in Ireland. His native tongue would have been Old English, though he would have to have known Old Irish to proselytize effectively in Ireland. Far from being rustic, Patrick was polyglottal. In order to learn Latin, Patrick would have learned to read some form of the Latin New Testament (rather than Virgil, which was the primary text

prior to Christianity), and would have learned to write in Latin from practicing rhetorical exercises. It seems clear from the genres he chose to write in that letter writing and *Confessio* were among those exercises taught in the rhetorical curriculum.

The final paraphrase in this passage comes from Romans 1:32. The Latin Vulgate version is as follows: “*qui cum iustitiam Dei cognovissent non intellexerunt quoniam qui talia agunt digni sunt morte non solum ea faciunt sed et consentiunt facientibus*” ‘Who, having known God’s justice, did not comprehend that those who do such [evil] things deserve death, and not only those that do such evil deeds, but those who consent to those that do them.’ Once again, attention is drawn to the parallel between the biblical situation and Patrick’s own. The theme of the condemnation of the man who disagrees with evil or injustice, but allows it to go on, is one that has been repeated throughout the centuries in the western rhetorical tradition. Patrick establishes a contextual parallel for newly found converts and old alike, that persuades them to admonish the socio-political structure and practice of early medieval Irish society and persuades his audience to conform to the socially stratifying practices of the Roman church. Through *syncrisis*, *pathos*, and *paraphrasis*, the persuasive function of the letter is strengthened.

In this next section of the letter, Patrick brings together several passages from the Pauline letters in order to create a juxtaposition between the biblical and his current context. Through rhetorical appeals, *syncrisis*, and *paraphrasis*, Patrick leads the letter’s audience to see Ireland’s context as parallel to that of Paul and the New Testament Christians. By appealing to *pathos*, Patrick compares the situation of the Christians enslaved by Coroticus to those Christians enslaved throughout the history of Christianity.

In order to combat this practice, Patrick establishes *ethos* by paraphrasing the New Testament.

*Nescio quid dicam uel quid loquar amplius de defunctis filiorum Dei, quos gladius supra modum dure tetigit. Scriptum est enim: Flete cum flentibus, et iterum: Si dolet unum membrum condoleant Omnia membra.*

*Quapropter ecclesia plorat et plangit filio et filias suas quas adhuc gladius nondum interfecit, sed prolongati et exportati in longa terrarum, ubi peccatum manifeste grauius impudenter abundant, ibi uenundati ingenui homines, Christiani in seruitute redacti sunt, praesertim indignissimorum pessimorum apostatarumque Pictorum*

I am ignorant of what to say or how to more fully tell of these dead sons of God, whom the sword has struck so harshly above measure. For it is written: Weep with those who weep. And again: If one member suffers, every member suffers. For this the church weeps and laments for its sons and daughters whom the sword has not yet killed, but who have been carried off to distant lands, where sin obviously, seriously, shamelessly overflows. There in that place the native people drive Christians into slavery, especially the most base and wicked apostate Picts. (257,15-18-26)

The use of three adverbs, “*grauiter*,” “*impudenter*,” and “*abundant*” creates a powerful admonishing effect. Moreover, even worse than death is being carried off into slavery. This is, as has been mentioned, something that Patrick can personally attest to. In admonishing the practice of slavery, as does Paul frequently throughout his letters,

Patrick asks that his audience empathize with the plight of the enslaved Christians.

Paraphrasing Paul in Rom 12:15, Patrick writes, “*gaudere cum gaudentibus flere cum flentibus*” ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.’ This is another example of *figura etymologica*. Patrick immediately follows this paraphrase with another of 1 Cor 12:26: “*et si quid patitur unum membrum conpatiuntur omnia membra sive gloriatur unum membrum congaudent omnia membra*” ‘And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with them. And if one member wins glory, all the members rejoice with them.’ This example of the Family Letter commonplace establishes the extent of the Christian family, which it is to include all Christians; therefore, to allow the enslavement of your neighbor is to allow the enslavement of your Christian brother. Achieving *pathos* in asking for empathy from his audience for those enslaved, Patrick establishes credibility through paraphrase of Paul’s letters. This rhetorical practice is continued throughout this section.

Patrick goes on to paraphrase Rom 5:20 and to resort, once again, to the commonplace of Family Letters. He writes: “For this the church weeps and laments for its sons and daughters who have not yet been put to the sword, but who have been carried off to distant lands, where sin overflows, and has manifested openly and shamelessly.” Those who have been killed, as Patrick writes later in the letter, have joined the crowd of the heavenly kingdom. Those who remain in unknown circumstances are far worse off. The Latin Vulgate version of Rom 5:20 reads: “*ex autem subintravit ut abundaret delictum ubi autem abundavit delictum superabundavit gratia*” ‘Now the law entered in so that sin was abundant. And where sin was in abundance, Grace was no more in abundance.’ The great fear that is derived from this paraphrase is that by being removed



from the Christian family and by being driven into slavery, those Christians Patrick baptized may lose their faith and never find their way to the heavenly kingdom. Davies explains the significance of Patrick's diction in this section:

Patrick uses the words *redacti sunt* [literally: they are reduced]. This echoes the Pauline theme in Rom 8: The Christians are those delivered from slavery, and they must not fall back into fear and slavery (Rom 8:15); so Patrick is concerned not only that they are physically the prisoners of the Picts and made into slaves, but that being with these sinful men, they might fall back into a former spiritual slavery. (494)

Davies explains the fear Patrick inspires for the fate of those sold into slavery. In being absent from the newly founded Christian family, they are in danger of returning to a life of sin and of losing their faith. In other words, in danger of not conforming to the value system of the Christian form of life. As Davies points out, this is the theme in Rom 8. Once again, Patrick draws on the Pauline epistolary tradition to create a parallel between his and Paul's context and to persuade his readers of the ills of this way of life. Like Paul, Patrick sought to persuade those pagans in early medieval Ireland to reject their social order and to emancipate themselves from both physical and spiritual slavery, as well as the social practices that lead to spiritual slavery. It is clear in this section of Patrick's letter that Paul served as the model for his rhetorical practices, and very likely as the model for rhetorical education in early monastic schools.

In the closing section of the letter, Patrick summarizes his admonishment of Coroticus and his men in *protreptic*, employing the Family Letter commonplace, the

Substitute for Personal Presence commonplace (and in this case the deity's absence), as well as the Prayer and Obeisance to the Gods commonplace.

*Testificor coram Deo et angelis suis quod ita erit sicut intimaui  
imperitiae meae. Non mea uerba sed Dei et apostolorum atque  
prophetarum quod ego Latinum exposui, qui numquam enim mentiti sunt.  
Qui crediderit saluus erit, qui non crediderit condemnabitur, Deus  
locutus est.*

I am witness before the eyes of God and his angels that it will [come about in this way, that is, the judgment], as it has been said, by someone as ignorant as me. These words are not mine but God's and his apostles and his prophets that I tell in Latin, and that never lie. He who believes will be rescued, he who does not believe will be condemned. God has spoken.

(259, 20.1-5)

It can be seen here that toward the close of this letter, Patrick's reliance upon the Pauline model wanes. Instead, Patrick establishes his own *ethos* in paraphrasing the Old Testament, particularly this line repeated in Psalms 59:8 and 107:8: "*Deus locutus est in sanctuario suo*" 'God has spoken in [through] his holiness.' Recalling the living nature of *logos*, the primordially of the written word of God, Patrick tells his audience that the word of God has been spoken through him, just as Patrick's living word will be spoken through the *lector*. The *ethos* that is established is persuasive, especially for Patrick's new Christian converts. Through this letter, Patrick supplements his own, as well as God's presence, which is supplemented in the form of the letter.

In the final section of the letter, this theme of supplementarity is continued in admonishing prose adorned with epistolary commonplace in *protreptic* form. This passage is as follows:

*Quaeso plurimum ut quicumque famulus Dei promptus fuerit ut sit gerulus litterarum harum, ut nequaquam subtrahatur uel asbcondatur a nemine, sed magis potius legatur coram cunctis plebibus et praesente ipso Corotico. Quod si Deus inspirit illos ut quandoque Deo resipiscant, ita ut el sero paeniteant quod tam impie gesserunt – homicida erga fratres Domini - et liberent captiuas baptizatas quas ante ceperunt, ita ut mereantur Deo uiuere et sani efficiantur hic et in aeternum! Pax Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, Amen.*

I beg that anyone who so much serves God who is able to be the carrier of this word should by no means hide it from any man, but be capable of dispatching it before all people and before Coroticus himself. If God inspires them they [the captives] might return to God and the penitents will give penance for a long time for their having been impious – murderers of the Lord's brothers – and they will liberate the captives, baptized before they were captured, so that the capturers may be worthy to live in God and to be whole here on earth and in eternity! Peace to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen. (259,21.6-13)

For one who carries the word of God, Patrick uses the word *gerulus*, which means “bearer,” “carrier,” “doer,” or “worker.” To carry this message is to be a worker for the good, a bearer of the word, a doer of the deeds of God. And it is not that the word is to be

simply read in the sense of the English “to read,” but Patrick uses the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular, passive, present, subjunctive of *lego*, “commission,” “dispatch,” “entrust,” “will,” “delegate,” “bequeath,” and also “it be read,” and “recite.” The meaning of Patrick’s Latin is much richer than the English translation allows. In reading this text to Coroticus and his men, the *lector* dispatches, entrusts, and bequeaths the word of God to his audience, bringing it to life in the minds of the listeners. Patrick pleads that the outcome of his audience essentially taking up missionary work themselves, a common theme throughout the entirety of Christianity, would be not only the conversion of the “murderers of the Lord’s brothers,” and therefore the murderers of their brothers in the Christian family, but the release and freedom of those who they have unjustly taken captive. The admonishment of this social practice and its practitioners make the rhetorical context clear.

Patrick paraphrases and adapts New Testament epistolary form and convention, along with Greco-Roman epistolary form and commonplace, and composes a letter seeking to persuade a specific audience in a specific rhetorical context. This analysis demonstrates clearly that Patrick was educated in Roman rhetorical practices by way of *progymnasmata* and *Greco-Roman epistolary* commonplace and convention. While in the art of oratory some orators may be said to possess skills naturally, skills that may be fine tuned under the instruction of the rhetorician, and skills that may be absorbed by listening to great orators, the same is not true of writing. As writing was a skill possessed only by the elite (although the same may be said of oratory), who were trained in Latin, and traditionally in Latin literature (and now in New Testament and the writings of the Church Fathers), knowledge of the genres as advanced as Patrick demonstrates could not have been accidental, but rather a result of his education. Since the geo-political

boundaries of the church were changing, were growing and expanding, the art of writing had become as significant, if not more so, than the art of speaking well. Most importantly, from this analysis emerge the beginnings of an understanding of Christian education in rhetoric and composition during the early medieval period in Roman and Celtic Briton.

## CHAPTER 6 THE RHETORIC OF THE CONFESSIO

Patrick's *Confessio* further demonstrates the author's rhetorical astuteness, as well as the extent of his literary training. As has been demonstrated in Patrick's *Epistola*, Patrick was well versed in a rhetorical curriculum, yet it was one that applied classical rhetorical pedagogy to the emergent context of the Christian church. As such, the main sources for modeling and for rhetorical training included scripture and the writings of the church fathers, particularly Augustine, though the latter claim is not without controversy. The *Confessio* has inspired more debate regarding sources and influences than the Letter. While there remains little doubt that the Pauline Epistles form a major influence for Patrick, claims which have led to the designation of Patrick as "*unius libri*," 'a man of one book,' such scholarship has failed to look at Patrick's writing as contiguous in a rhetorical tradition, one which the church is heir to. This section of the study will consider the concept of confession, its rhetorical nature and literary precedents, followed by an analysis of the Augustinian and Pauline influences on Patrick's text. Ultimately, confession, along with the *ars dictaminis* had become significant new genres in the art of rhetoric in this period.

First, there must be a working definition of confession from which to begin this inquiry. Michel Foucault's writings on confession in the *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, are highly influential in contemporary conceptions of confession. Foucault differentiates between a Stoic and Christian confession. In the former, the confession serves as a means of self-cultivation. In the latter, the confession serves as a production of the self as political subject:

For a long time, the individual was vouched for by the reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonwealth (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself. The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power. (Foucault 59)

The Christian period, as this excerpt from Foucault suggests, was marked by the emergence of individuality, an emergence that marked a changing conception of interiority and exteriority. In the Greek public sphere, the internal and external were “laid bare” on a surface, which was mankind (Bakhtin 136). Confession, as such, was the bringing before the public’s eye one’s self and in writing. It is a rhetorical act in that it is a metonymical act. That is, the confession represents, by association, the emergent individual who is constructed in the very act of confessing/writing itself.

Mikhail Bakhtin explains this development in the Roman era, particularly in light of Augustine’s *Confessiones*:

Moreover, the available public and rhetorical genres could not by their very nature provide for the expression of life that was private, a life of activity that was increasingly expanding in width and depth and retreating more and more into itself. Under such circumstances drawing-room rhetoric acquired increasing importance. (143)

Drawing-room rhetoric includes personal letters, familiar letters, and the confession. The confession was an integral part of that movement in rhetorical theory and practice, heretofore elaborated, away from the rhetoric of public assembly. In the Roman era, there

was a further development of the concept of the individual and this new form of rhetoric reflected this formation of the subject. The confessing self, put on display for the public to see, was also the becoming self; to confess was to become one's self, to pull the self from the depths of memory, and it was to do so in writing. In other words, the writing self wrote oneself into existence in the act of confessing. In the Christian era, which of course shares affinities with the Roman era, this phenomenon is most prominent. But, as an ideologically formative discourse, as is all discourse, confession is a discursive force in the ideological formation of other selves, as well. This is clearly an important element of this new genre in the rhetorical arts.

It is confession in the Christian era that most interested Foucault. He provides a succinct definition of the confession:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console...and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it. (Foucault 61)

It is clear from this quotation that confession is a sophisticated social construct. From this one can see that the confession, as subject formation and subjection simultaneously, is a political act. While one confesses, one confesses to another, to others, and does so in



order to modify oneself by the making public of that which is personal. By confessing, one subjects oneself to authority, to judicial power; one becomes a subject in this dual sense. In confessing, one also calls for the subjection of others in their own imitation of one's example. Interestingly, in articulating the self as individual, one also becomes part of a community, of the judicial power structure, in short, of the Christian family.

The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, along with Seneca's *De Ira* are considered the prime example of this new genre in the Roman era, while St. Augustine's *Confessiones* serve as the model of confession in the Christian era. Michael L. Humphries, in his article "Michel Foucault on Writing and the Self in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and Confession of St. Augustine" provides an explication of the role of writing in the Christian confession, as well as the discursive force of the confessing Christian. Humphries explains that in Stoic confession, one writes/confesses to cultivate the self, whereas the Christian, specifically the bishop, writes "in order to procure the self from the depths of its memory, and the Bishop writes in order to induce the confession of others" (131). And yet, confession is still the means by which one "collects the self from the depths of its memory...*cogitare* [to think] is also *scribo* [to write]; the confession of the self is also the writing of the self and thus a practical and strategic response to the fleeting moments of the present" (Humphries 132). Recalling the impetus of Patrick's Letter, the desire to persuade others to abandon pagan ways and to join the Christian family, this desire to induce the confessions of others is significant. Patrick confesses in order to persuade others around him to confess, as well. Patrick's rhetoric is a distinctly proselytizing rhetoric through and through. At the same time, Patrick's *Confessio* serves as a "writing of the self," a collecting of the self from memory. Importantly, Patrick's

*Confessio* also serves the function of writing in the sense Agamben explicates; Patrick's imitation of Paul is the source of the supplement of God's *logos*.

Humphries explains that the proliferation of confession is an integral aspect of the act in the Christian context. This is only true because of the role writing plays in Christian confession. He writes, "Perhaps in addition to being a practical tool for the enhancement of one's own ability to confess effectively, writing serves more importantly as a form of correspondence in which others are induced to expose themselves similarly" (Humphries 134). Writing one's confession induces a proliferation of the act of not only writing, but of confession. Therefore, the bishop's confession, as the incarnate word of God, incites confession from others. Whether or not the confessions of others are oral or written matters little here, for the impetus is, after all, a political one: "the writing activity itself facilitates an even greater intensification of social relations or, perhaps more appropriately, power relations" (Humphries 135). This *publicatio sui* is most certainly clear in Patrick's letter, and as will be demonstrated below, in the *Confessio*, as well.

Before expounding upon the extent of Augustinian influence on Patrick's writings, why such an influence is significant must be elaborated. Augustine wrote in an era known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> sophistic (50 – 400 CE), a period marked by a rhetoric that "rewarded delivery, style, and ornamentation with little or no attention to substance" (Troup 4). It is important to note that this was largely an academic phenomenon, as by the late Roman period rhetoric no longer played the essential civic role that it had in previous centuries. The rhetoric of the 2<sup>nd</sup> sophistic was condemned by Augustine, a condemnation that has troubled scholars, for Augustine is also said to have been he who preserved rhetoric in the medieval era (Murphy 56-57). Murphy has even made the claim that "Augustine himself,

in a certain sense, was converted from rhetoric to Christianity” (51). Yet, it was not rhetoric in itself that Augustine condemned, but the rhetoric taught by the sophists; it was the privileging of the saying over the said that Augustine condemned.

Christian rhetoricians were numerous in the Empire before Augustine (Paul, Origen, Tertullian), but Augustine can be said to have most fully developed a Christian theory of rhetoric for the medieval era in *De doctrina Christiana* (Kennedy 613).

Kennedy says,

Greeks and Romans educated in rhetoric and philosophy were converted to Christianity, and though they often rejected the mythical and pagan literature in which they had been trained, and sometimes forswore literary values as a whole, they were apt to continue to draw on the concepts of philosophy or employ the devices of rhetoric in support of their new enthusiasm. (608)

Augustine, after his conversion to Christianity in the garden of Milan, turned his back on his position as chair of rhetoric, which he referred to scathingly as a “chair of lies” (*Confessiones* 9.1.1). Herein lies the conundrum for scholars attempting to place Augustine in the history of rhetoric. How does one place a thinker in a tradition that the thinker bitinglly condemns? James Farrell summarizes the scholarly consensus on this matter: “At the same time [as he condemns rhetoric] Augustine does not condemn the discipline of rhetoric itself, but rather a truncated and corrupted residue of it” (6). Several historians of rhetoric have argued for the influence of Ciceronian rhetoric on Augustine’s writings. Farrell claims that,

But, if Augustine did learn or teach more than the purely practical elements of rhetoric, we can be reasonably certain that his theoretical training was Ciceronian, for it is not only the case that Augustine was educated, and undertook his teaching duties against the background of a rhetorical culture that ‘was thoroughly Ciceronian,’ there is also significant scholarly consensus about the theoretical work that would have dominated the rhetorical curriculum of Augustine’s time and the study of rhetoric throughout the Middle Ages. (7)

This quote captures the importance of the Augustinian influence throughout the Middle Ages, and reveals that influence as Ciceronian.

Augustine applied Ciceronian rhetoric to the work of the Christian orator. Troup explains the manner in which Augustine was influenced by “Cicero’s eclectic approach to philosophy and his rhetoric which demands the integration of philosophy and eloquence in the person of the orator” (20). Augustine takes Cicero’s notion of *animi medicina* ‘medicine for the soul,’ which expounds the usefulness of philosophy to the individual and therefore to the republic, and creates a Christian version in which philosophical wisdom is replaced with Christian wisdom and devotion to the Christian God, yet rhetoric retains its importance. While Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* in its entirety is dedicated to explaining the role and nature of the Christian orator, this section of chapter 6 nicely captures the main essence of Augustine’s position:

But as some men employ these coarsely, inelegantly, and frigidly, while others use them with acuteness, elegance, and spirit, the work that I am speaking of ought to be undertaken by one who can argue

and speak with wisdom, if not with eloquence, and with profit to his hearers, even though he profit them less than he would if he could speak with eloquence too. But we must beware of the man who abounds in eloquent nonsense, and so much the more if the hearer is pleased with what is not worth listening to, and thinks that because the speaker is eloquent what he says must be true. (9.5.1-4 trans J.O. O'Donnell)

To possess the wisdom of the Christian God born of the close study of the scripture does the Christian little good if he is unable to persuade his audience of this truth. As it is the duty of all Christians to spread the word of God and proselytize, rhetoric and wisdom combined, according to Augustine, are effective in achieving this end.

The difference expounded here is that between the humanism of Cicero and the Christian ethics of Augustine. Interestingly, the rhetorical theory of Cicero was deeply influenced by Greek sophistry. Michael C. Leff claims that the “union of wisdom and eloquence” in Cicero’s thought should be understood thusly:

Following in the humanistic tradition of the Greek sophists, Cicero attempted to preserve the integrity of the logos, to forge an unbreakable link between the art of thinking and the art of speaking, and to bring the whole system into contact with the political life of the community. (3)

The precepts of Cicero’s rhetorical theory are that, firstly, style and content are inseparable. Secondly, Cicero privileged practice and experience over instruction in

theory. Finally, the type of instruction Cicero championed was linked with imitation, particularly the type of imitation found in the pedagogy of Isocrates (Leff 3).

Augustine's rhetorical theory shares these basic precepts of Cicero's theory in common. To begin, Augustine favors practice over theory (Leff 5). Secondly, Augustine also championed a marriage of content and style. However, for Augustine, the message itself does not issue forth from the orator, but from the scripture: "Truly eloquent style has its origin in the message itself... The language of the scriptures is perfectly suited to the content, and an almost unconscious flow of eloquence issues from them" (Leff 5). Leff claims the end of Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* "ends with the assertion that a spontaneous and natural eloquence attaches itself to scripture" (5). Interestingly, Augustine refers to Romans in order to elucidate this point. Augustine's development of the theory of oratory for the Christian carries with it implications for rhetorical pedagogy in the Christian era.

For example, Augustine champions imitation as an effective oratorical pedagogy, but the models for imitation have changed. Instead of pagan authors, Paul, Ambrose, Cyprian, the Church Fathers fill this role. The role of rhetoric in Augustine also changes from serving a temporal good, to serving a spiritual good. The marriage of style and content in the inherent eloquence of the scriptures will serve the Christian orator in realizing the city of God, that is, in converting others to Christianity. When considering the elements of a Christian rhetorical education in the British Isles in the early medieval period gleaned from the rhetorical analysis of Patrick's Letter, one could conjecture that Augustine's writings played an integral role in these pedagogical developments. The

influences of Augustine's *Confessiones* on Patrick's *Confessio* further supports this assertion.

## CHAPTER 7

## AUGUSTINE AND PATRICK

Considering the import of Augustine's explication of the duty of the Christian orator, and considering the extent to which Augustine's work was received in the early medieval period, an understanding of the extent of the Augustinian influence on Patrick's work is essential. Also, determining the extent of Augustinian influence on Patrick's text provides a more accurate place from which to conjecture on the theoretical role Augustine may have played in early medieval rhetorical education. Since Augustine makes clear in Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* that the study of rhetoric, along with the study of scripture, are essential for the success of the Christian orator, it is likely that this doctrine infiltrated the curriculum of early medieval monastic schools and shaped the way that rhetoric was taught. If such a thesis is accepted, then Patrick's texts provide important insight into the significance of Augustine's writings in rhetorical curriculum in monastic schools in the British Isles in the early medieval period. Also, this provides an explanation for the stylistic choices and the use of rhetorical *topos* witnessed in Patrick's writings. In other words, this rhetorical analysis of Patrick's texts reveals the texts used for study, namely Augustine, the Church Fathers, and the scripture, specifically the Pauline Epistles, as well as the theoretical underpinning of rhetorical pedagogy, especially imitation, and the development of a medieval Christian rhetoric and composition in early medieval British monastic schools.

The relationship between Patrick and Augustine is most commonly discussed in terms of the influence of Augustine's *Confessiones* on Patrick's own *Confessio*. Whether there may be an Augustinian influence on Patrick's work has not been questioned as fully



as the possibility of Patrick's having even read the text at all. Bieler took up the question in his "Confessio of St. Patrick," where he casts doubt on the possibility. J. O'Meara in "Patrick's Confessio and Augustine's Confessiones" follows Bieler's thought in response to other scholars claiming a connection and a direct influence and claims himself that the likelihood of Patrick's even having access to the text was doubtful. He says, "The hard evidence given by Courcelle, therefore, of the knowledge of the *Confessiones* in Gaul in the fifth century can be reduced to, perhaps significantly, Prosper at Marseilles[...]whatever our views of the fame of the *Confessiones*, our certain knowledge of its fame in Gaul in the fifth century seems disappointing" (O'Meara 52). However, O'Meara's claim is truly undermined by a comment made earlier in this passage. O'Meara makes the claim that

Of people not so immediately connected with Augustine, Prosper of Aquitaine, who lived at Marseilles up to 440, mentions Germanus and Palladius, and died after 455, is of clear interest in a Patrician context. His *Liber Sententiarum ex operibus sancti Augustini delibaratum* affords incontrovertible proof of his use of the *Confessiones*. (52)

O'Meara points to a clear connection between Germanus and Palladius (the reader will recall the claim made earlier in this study that Germanus was likely Patrick's teacher) and Augustine. Considering the connection already established between Patrick, Palladius, and Germanus, it seems quite likely that Patrick had been introduced to Augustine's *Confessiones*. Moreover, it is important to note that an influence does not mean direct borrowing. In a rhetorical curriculum in which modeling of the New Testament,

particularly Paul, was paramount, one need not look for an exact replication of Augustine's text in order to demonstrate a familiarity and influence.

More recently, Dronke has addressed this issue in the article cited several times above, "St. Patrick's Reading." It is Dronke's contention that the evidence external to the text, though appealing, is in no way as strong as that internal to the text: "I would suggest, on the contrary, that on the matter of external evidence it may be wiser to suspend judgment; while the question of internal evidence is as subtle and many-branched as that of Middleton's debt to Shakespeare" (25). What Dronke does identify, if not word for word borrowing from Augustine's text, are syntactic and stylistic patterns that are distinctively Augustinian appearing in Patrick's text. Augustine's style, Dronke says, is influenced by the biblical, yet is very much unique to the author's corpus: "In particular, Augustine has a parallelism that consists in combining a passionate personal utterance and a biblical echo in the same sentence or group of sentences, so that the personal and biblical moments are juxtaposed, made symmetrical syntactically and harmonized emotionally" (26). Dronke admits, and fortuitously for the current study, that what is not Augustinian in Patrick is indeed Pauline. Yet in the *Confessio* Dronke sees these distinctively Augustinian tropes:

[...]the way in which a man, while telling about himself, telling – often allusively, sometimes very fully – of the circumstances of his life, and confessing his own sinfulness, sees God as the indwelling presence in his life, the guiding force of his destiny, and is moved to proclaim this to the world and again and again to give thanks for it. (26)

Dronke sees this not only as the nature of *Confessio*, but as something distinct to Augustine's Confessional writings. Considering Dronke's remarks here, the influence of Augustine on Patrick's texts are clear. Turning to those texts, this study will look first to the analysis given by Dronke of the primary texts themselves.

Dronke draws our attention first to Patrick's text:

*Sed postquam Hiberione deueneram – cotidie itaque pecora pascebam et frequens in die orabam – magis ac magis accedebat amor Dei et timor ipsius et fides augebatur et spiritus agebatur* and after I had arrived in Ireland – each day after pasturing my animals and praying frequently – more and more I came near to love of God and fear of God and faith grew in me and spirit grew in me. (Bieler 239-16.16-18)

Dronke breaks up the text in order to demonstrate the syntactic parallels. We will begin with the example of Patrick's text, followed by Dronke's presentation of Augustine's text on page 27 of Dronke's article:

*Cotidie itaque pecora pascebam et frequens in die orabam –  
Magis ac magis accedebat amor dei et timor ipsius  
Et fides augebatur et spiritus agebatur*

From the *Confessiones* VIII. 15:

*Et legebat et mutabatur intus,  
Ubi tu videbas, et exuebatur mundo...*

Here Dronke draws attention to the balancing of parallel expressions, and rhyme. As Howlett's study was noted as arguing for numerous instances of biblical parallel throughout Patrick's text, Dronke also sees this as an instance where parallel in Patrick is

likely drawn from Augustine. Dronke does note that while “*magis ac magis accedebat amor dei*” also appears in the Pauline Phil-1.9, “the use of a twofold *magis* occurs in Augustine especially in passages of emotional intensity...” (28). Just as Augustine writes of setting sail and leaving what was important behind him, we see this trope throughout Patrick’s texts, as well. However, this is also a common trope throughout the Pauline Epistles. Yet, Dronke makes a stronger case for the Augustinian influence later on in his essay.

The most convincing section of Dronke’s analysis deals with visionary experience in Patrick and Augustine’s text. It is worth quoting in full in order to establish for the reader the delicacy and nuance of Dronke’s position. For this reason, I will also rely upon Dronke’s translations of both Patrick and Augustine’s text in my explication.

Patrick’s *Confessio*:

*Sed unde me venit ignaro in spiritu ut Heliam vocarem? Et inter haec vidi in caelum solem oriri, et dum clamaren ‘Helia, Helia’ viribus meis, ecce splendor solis illius decedit super me, et statim discussit a me omnem gravitudinem, et credo quod a Christo domino meo subventus sum*  
 (Chapter 20) ...*et legi principium epistolae continentem ‘Vox Hiberionacum’, et cum recitabam principium epistolae putabam ipso momento audire vocem ipsorum, qui errant iuxta silvam Vocluti, quae est prope mare occidentale, et sic exclamaverunt quasi ex uno ore: ‘Rogamus te, [sancte] puer, ut venias et adhuc ambulas inter nos’, et valde compunctus sum corde, et amplius non potui legere, et sic expertus sum.*  
 (Chapter 23)

*Et alia nocte – nescio, deus scit, utrum in me an iuxta me – verbis peritissime, quos ego audiui et non potui intellegere, nisi ad postremum orationis sic effitiatus est: ‘Qui dedit animam suam pro te, ipse est qui loquitur in te’, et sic expertus sum gaudibundus. (Chapter 24)*

*Et iterum vidi in me ipsum orantem, et eram quasi intra corpus meum, et audiui super me, hoc est super interiorem hominem, et ibi fortiter orabat gemitibus, et inter haec stupebam et ammirabam et cogitabam quis esset qui in me orabat, sed ad postremum orationis sic effitiatus est ut sit Spiritus, et sic expertus sum. (Chapter 25, cited in Dronke, 29)*

Augustine's *Confessiones*:

*Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intravi in intima dea duce te et potui, quoniam factus es adiutor meus. Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem inconmutabilem, non hanc vulgarem et sonspiciuam omni carni nec quasi ex eodem genere, grandior erat, tamquam si ista multo multoque clarius claresceret totumque occuparet magnitudine. Non hoc illa era, sed aliud, aliud valde ab istis omnibus. Nec ita erat supra mentem meam sicut oleum super aquam, nec sicut caelum super terram, sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea...Et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei, radians in me vehementer, et contremui amore et horror (VII. 16)*

*Iactabam voces miserabiles: 'Quamdiu, quamdiu, cras et cras? Auare non modo? Quare non hac hora finis turpitudinis meae?' Dicebam haec et flebam amarissima contrition cordis mei. Et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: 'Tolle, lege; tolle, lege'. Statimque mutata vultu intentissimus cogitare coepi, utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquot genere ludendi canitare tale aliquid, nec occurrebat omnino audisse me uspiam, repressoque impetus lacrimarum surrexi, nihil aliud interpretans divinitus mihi iuberi, nisi ut aperirem codicem et legerem quod primum caput invenissem...arripui, aperui et legi in silentio capitulum...Nec ultra volui legere, nec opus erat. (Augustine, Conf. VII. 16 and VIII. 28-29, cited in Dronke, 30)*

The English translations of these sections are as follows:

Patrick's *Confessio*:

But from where did the notion come to me, ignorant in spirit, that I should invoke Elias? And at the same time I saw the sun rising into the heavens, and while I shouted 'Elias! Elias!' with all my might, suddenly the splendor of that sun fell upon me, and at once drove away all bodily pain from me, and I believe I was sustained by Christ my lord. (Chapter 23)

And I read the beginning of the letter containing 'the voices of the Irish', and while I was reading the beginning of the letter aloud, I thought in that same moment that I was hearing their voice: those who were beside the forest of Foclut, which is near the Western Sea; and they were shouting

thus as if with one accord: 'We ask you, boy, to come and once again walk in our midst'; and in my heart I was stabbed to the quick, and could not read further – and so I awoke. (Chapter 23)

And another night – I know not, God knows, whether in me or beside me – with words most aptly, which I heard and could not understand, except that at the end of my prayer he affirmed: 'He who gave his soul for you, it is he who speaks in you', and so I awoke overjoyed.

And again I saw into myself praying, and was as if within my body, and I heard above me, that is, above my inner man, and there he was praying mightily with groans, and amid this I was stupefied and amazed and thought, who could it be who was praying within me? But at the end of the prayer it professed itself to be the spirit – and so I awoke. (Chapter 25, qtd. in Dronke 29)

Augustine's *Confessiones*:

And admonished by the [neo-Platonic writings] to return to myself, I entered into my inner depths with you as guide, and I was able to, because you were made my helper. I entered and saw with the eye of my soul whatever it was like, above that eye of my soul, above my mind, a changeless light – not the common light visible to every creature, as if not of the same kind but greater, as if it shone far, far more brightly and occupied everything by its magnitude. It was not that common light but quite, quite different from any such. Nor was it above my mind in the way oil is over water, nor as heaven is over earth, but higher because it made

me, and I lower because made by it...And you beat back the infirmity of my gaze, radiating into me violently, and I shuddered with love and with horror.

I cried out in my wretchedness: ‘How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow! Why not now? Why not in this very hour an end to my baseness?’ I said that, and wept in all the bitterness of my crushed heart. And suddenly I hear a voice from the house next door, with the song of one chanting, often repeating – it might be a boy or girl, I don’t know which – ‘Take it, read it! Take it, read it!’ And at once, as my face changed, I began to think most intently whether children usually changed something of this kind in some sort of game – I couldn’t remember having heard it anywhere – and, stifling my impulse to tears, I arose, interpreting it as nothing but a divine command to open my manuscript and read the first chapter I encountered...I seized it, opened it, and read the chapter in silence...Nor did I wish to read further, nor was there need. (qtd. in Dronke, 30)

To begin, Dronke makes the following observations. Both Patrick and Augustine compare outer and inner sunlight, the latter being a more intense light and an experience of the divine. Both of these experiences end with a sense of a “heavenly welcome” (Dronke 31). In Ch. 23 in Patrick’s text, and in Augustine’s account of the “Tolle, lege” game, both of the authors conjoin spoken and written messages which reveal the destiny of each saint (Dronke 31). Dronke also remarks that Patrick’s description of going into himself in chapters 24 and 25,



though reminiscent of a Pauline “unearthly experience,” is distinctively Augustinian. Both suggest that by going within themselves, the divine power is able to enter and do its will within them. Dronke’s analysis traces the finely nuanced content of each text and in doing so reveals the extent to which Patrick modeled Augustine’s text. In doing this, Dronke also admits of the strong influence of Pauline rhetorical strategies throughout Patrick’s text.

In fact, this is an important distinction between the two sections compared above. In Augustine’s text, he cites the scripture only once. In Patrick’s section, he cites the scripture eighteen times, and the Pauline Epistles specifically six times. This demonstrates not that Patrick was a man of one book with little education and who was poorly read, but that early monastic rhetorical education in the British Isles had adapted Augustinian concepts of Christian oratory to the emergent context of the Christian church. In this curriculum, imitation, letter writing, and close study of the scripture were paramount, but were taught alongside *progymnasmatic* exercises, of which *imitatio* itself is a part. As per Augustine, the Church Fathers (including Augustine), specifically Cyprian, the scriptures, and specifically the Pauline letters, were the primary texts of study in this new phase of rhetorical education. There was clearly a pronounced focus on writing, which is another key distinguishing factor in this new context. It should be noted at this point that where Patrick received his education is up for speculation, as was discussed above. Also, the rhetorical curriculum of one monastic school would certainly not be indicative of practices at all monastic schools. However, considering the likelihood of Patrick’s having studied with Germanus, an influential and worldly scholar, and considering the likelihood of Patrick’s having studied on the continent, as well as in

Briton, the evidence internal to Patrick's texts can be said to be indicative of a trend in monastic education in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The extent and nature of this new rhetorical theory and practice will be demonstrated below by way of close rhetorical analysis of Patrick's *Confessio*.

## CHAPTER 8

## PAUL AND PATRICK IN THE CONFESSIO

Of the 322 biblical allusions made in the *Confessio*, 138 of them are to the Pauline *Epistles*. That Paul's writings are alluded to in no less than one third of all allusions to scripture is clearly quite significant. In total, the New Testament is cited approximately 231 times, whereas the Old Testament is cited approximately 91. These numbers are said to be approximate as some allusions overlap thematically and linguistically and the biblical source is either not clear, or is debatable. Of the 91 approximate Old Testament allusions, 33 are from the Psalms. Genesis and Deuteronomy are cited fairly frequently, and Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Job are alluded to on only a few occasions. Of the 231 allusions to the New Testament, excluding the Pauline *Epistles*, Acts is alluded to 22 times, Luke is alluded to 15 times, Matthew 14, and the rest from various books of the New Testament. Considering these numbers, it is clear that the New Testament did serve as the primary text of study for Patrick, and especially the Pauline Epistles, though not to the exclusion of the Old Testament.

Augustine, augmenting the models for study in rhetorical curriculum provided by Quintilian, points to the New Testament, and particularly Pauline Epistles, as the ideal model of study for the student of rhetoric. As is made evident in the indebtedness of Augustine to Quintilian, imitation was not a new practice. Early Greek sophists prescribed imitation as the best means of teaching to speak or to write (Kennedy 1999, p. 50). Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his work *On Imitation*, prescribes the imitation of the style of great writers. By the time Augustine was writing, imitation in the practice of *progymnasmata* was standard. Kennedy explains the augmentation of this practice in

Augustine's writings: "In fact, study of rules is not necessary at all, for eloquence can be learned from imitation of eloquent models (4.5)[...]based on a canon of models such as those discussed in Quintilian 10.1. Augustine would replace that canon with a new canon of the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church" (Kennedy 1999, p. 178). Importantly for this study, Kennedy goes on to explain the significance of this pedagogical practice in the Christian era:

In the subsequent discussion, he finds many examples of classical rhetorical techniques in writings of Paul and the Old Testament[...]As to the virtues of style as seen in the Scriptures or practiced by a Christian, clarity is the only real consideration (4.23), though appropriateness was noted earlier (4.9). (Kennedy 1999, p. 178)

This explanation is important to the above discussion of the scholarly critics of Patrick's work who claimed that his education must have been limited due to the simplicity of his style; this is the rhetorical tradition in which Patrick was trained. Kennedy also explains the changing of the concept of *ethos* in the Christian era. The deeds of the teacher, his Christian works and the manner in which they accord with his teachings provides the Christian orator with moral authority. In this light, it is clear why the *Confessio* was a significant genre in this era as the narrating of deeds and events from the life of the Christian who is to serve as the model for others establishes that moral authority.

While *mimesis*, or *imitatio*, was a standard pedagogical practice in the rhetoric classroom, it is also an important concept in Christian thought both cosmologically and theologically. Predating Christianity, Platonic philosophy posited the material world as a representation of the unseen, ideal world of Forms. This is the entry point for the

Derridean project of deconstruction. If the material world is already an imitation, a supplement for another reality, imitation of worldly models is imitation of an imitation. Plato considered spoken language to be that which was nearest to *logos* and writing is at a further remove. This is the impetus for Plato's distrust of sophistic practices of writing as represented by Socrates in *Phaedrus* (274c5 – 279c5). But, in the Christian context of the early medieval period, the primacy of the written text as that in which the living Word of God resides inverts this paradigm. As Agamben states, the Rule of the Master (the Benedictine Monastic Rule written after the current time period being discussed, but still highly relevant to, and the end result of, common monastic practice) prescribes a form of life to be imitated. It is the Word of God, alive in the written rule, as well as the example of other Christians and, importantly, Christ himself, that serves as the model of imitation for the Christian. Therefore, Patrick's imitation of the Pauline Epistles, and the Scriptures in general, as a model for his writing and in his own Christian works that he describes, reveals Patrick's training in an innovative early medieval, monastic rhetorical curriculum developed according to the work of Augustine and adapted to the shifting socio-political and geo-political context of the medieval Christian world.

## CHAPTER 9

## SCRIPTURAL ETHOS: IMITATION AND THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Patrick's *Confessio* begins with the humility *topos* and imitation of the Pauline Epistles. Patrick explains his genealogy and provides a brief account of his enslavement in a passage marked by *pathos*.

*Ego Patricius peccator rusticissimus et minimus omnium fidelium et contemptibilissimus apud plurimos patrem habui Calpornium diaconum filium quondam Potiti presbyteri, qui fuit uico bannauem taburniae; uillulam enim prope habuit, ubi ego capturam dedi Annorum eram tunc fere sedecim. Deum enim uerum ignorabam et Hiberione in captiuitate adductus sum cum tot milia hominum – secundum merita nostra, quia a Deo recessimus et praecepta eius non custodiimus et sacerdotibus nostris non oboedientes fuimus, qui nos <nos> nostrum salutem admonebant: et Dominus induxit super nos iram animationis suae et dispersit nos in gentibus multis etiam usque ad ultimum terrae, ubi nunc paruitas mea esse uidetur inter alienigenas, et ibi Dominus aperuit sensum incredulitatis meae, ut uel sero rememorarem delicta mea et ut conuerterem toto corde ad Dominum Deum meum, qui respexit humilitatem meam et misertus est adolescentiae et ignorantiae meae et custodiuit me antequam scirem eum et antequam saperem uel distinguerem inter bonum et malum et muniuit me et consolatus est me ut pater filium.*

I, Patrick, am a sinner most rustic and the least of all believers and the most contemptible in the presence of churchmen. I bear the name of my father, Calpornius, who bears the name of his father, the priest Potitus, a countrymen of Bannavem Taberniae. Indeed, he held a small village nearby where, when I was nearly sixteen years old, I was captured, led away, and bound. Indeed, truly ignorant of God, I was brought to Ireland in captivity with many thousands of people. Because we had withdrawn from God and his rule, in accordance with our merits we were confined; we were not obedient to his command or our priests who warned us about our salvation: and the Lord brought upon us the heat of his anger and scattered us among many heathens at the ends of the earth, in which place my humble self is seen among these strangers, and in this place the Lord opened my unbelieving to understanding so that, even late, I remembered my sins and so that my heart was converted entirely to God who gazed on my lowliness and the miserable ignorance of my youth before I knew Him and before I could discriminate between good and evil and He strengthened me as a father does a son. (235,2.1 – 236,1)

The initial imitation of the Pauline Epistles serves to establish Patrick's *ethos* as a vessel carrying the word of God. In his humility, and in his lowliness, he was chosen by God to carry the Good News to the ends of the earth and to spread the city of God. The Pauline text is as follows: "*fidelis sermo et omni acceptione dignus quia Christus Iesus venit in mundum peccatores salvos facere quorum primus ego sum*" "A faithful saying, and

worthy of all respect, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the greatest” (1 Tm 1:15). Also alluded to is Eph 3:8: “*mihi omnium sanctorum minimo data est gratia haec in gentibus evangelizare ininvestigabiles divitias Christi*” “To me, the least of all the saints, is this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.” These allusions point to the significance of imitation in this period. Not only was Patrick quite literally imitating the Epistles of Paul, but he was also imitating his way of life. By drawing attention to the parallels between his own and Paul’s life, Patrick not only establishes *ethos* with his Christian audience, but he imitates the good Christian form of life. In confessing, Patrick persuades his audience to imitate his example.

In the next section of the *Confessio*, the Pauline Epistles are used as the model for Patrick’s writing at least six times. Here, Patrick establishes for his audience the form of life prescribed by Christ, the ultimate model of imitation:

*Quia non est alius Deus nec umquam fuit nec ante nec erit post haec  
praeter Deum Patrem ingenitum, sine principio, a quo est omne  
principium, Omnia tenentem, ut didicimus; et huius filium Iesum Christum,  
quem cum Patre scilicet semper fuisse testamur, ante originem saeculi  
spiritaliter apud Patrem <et> Inenarrabiliter genitum ante omne  
principium, et per ipsum facta sunt uisibilia et inuisibilia, hominem factum,  
morte deuicta in caelis ad Patrem receptum, et dedit illi omnem  
potestatem super omne nomen caelestium et terrestrium et infernorum et  
omnis lingua confiteatur ei quia Dominus et Deus est Iesus Christus, quem  
credimus et expectamus aduentum ipsius mox futurum, iudex uiuorum*



*atque mortuorum, qui reddet unicuique secundum facta sua; et effudit in nobis habunde Spiritum Sanctum, donum et pignus immortalitatis, qui facit credentes et oboedientes ut sint filii Dei et coheredes Christi: quem confitemur et adoramus unum Deum in trinitate sacri nominis.*

Because there is not another God and there has not been at any time before nor has there been after. Without beginning, from him everything is born, everything he keeps, so that from him everything is acquired. And his son, Jesus Christ, whom, along with his father, we profess, has always existed, before the beginning of mankind, begotten in the spiritual presence of the father and indescribable, before all, first in order and through his deeds all things were made, both visible and invisible. He was made man, to overcome death, and was taken back into heaven, and was given every power, above every name in heaven and on and earth and below the earth and every tongue confesses that our Lord and God is Jesus Christ, in whom we believe and whose return we await in the future, when he will judge of the living and the dead and who will repay each one according to his deeds. And who pours out the Holy Spirit on us abundantly, a gift and guarantee of immortality, who makes those who believe and listen into sons of God and heirs with Christ, who we confess and adore one God in trinity of sacred name. (236,1.4-23)

In this section, Col 1:17, Col 1:16, Phil 2:9-11, Rom 2:6, Ti 3:5-6, and Rom 8:14-19 are weaved together into a new text. Most significant among these in terms of bearing on the rest of the text are Ti 3:5-6 and Rom 8:14-19. In Timothy 3:5-6, Paul relates the doctrine

of grace: “*quem effudit in nos abunde per Iesum Christum salvatorem nostrum*” “Which [the Holy Spirit] he has poured forth upon us in abundance, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” That which is being poured forth in the form of the holy spirit is grace. This is the first instance of the doctrine of grace in Patrick’s text, but it serves as a primary theme that refutes Pelagian doctrine and announces an allegiance to Augustinian theology. This is an integral part of the rhetorical context of Patrick’s *Confessio*, as is the theme announced in the imitation of Romans 8:14-19.

In this section of the Pauline letter, Paul declares that those who imitate Christ, or who are guided by the spirit of Christ, will achieve glory regardless of the suffering they may face while in captivity, or while in earthly form. The Latin Vulgate text reads “*ipse Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro quod sumus filii Dei si autem filii et heredes*” “For the Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also.” Heirs here refers to being an heir of God and with Christ. The sons of God and heirs of Christ theme, a Pauline theme, is witnessed throughout the *Confessio* and serves as an invitation to join the Christian family, which is to imitate Christ. Once again, through imitation of Paul, Patrick calls on the Irish pagan to imitate the Christian form of life.

Patrick reveals something of his potential audience in his explanation of the context of his writing that occurs in the next section. By once again imitating Paul in allusion to Tm 3:14-15, Patrick continues use of the humility *topos* in addressing his reasons for having not written up until this point:

*Quapropter olim cogitavi scriber, sed et usque nunc haesitavi; timui enim ne incederem in linguam hominum, quia non didici sicut et ceteri, qui*

*optime itaque iura et sacras litteras utraque pari modo combiberunt et sermons illorum ex infantia numquam mutarunt, sed magis ad perfectum semper addiderunt. Nam sermo et loquela nostra translate est in linguam alienam, sicut facile potest probari ex salua scripturae meae qualiter sum ego in sermonibus instructus atque eruditus, quia, inquit, sapiens per linguam dinoscetur et sensus et scientia et doctrina ueritatis. Sed quid prodest excusatio iuxta ueritatem, praesertim cum praesumptione, quatenus modo ipse adpeto in senectute mea quod in iuuentute non comparaui? quod obstiterunt peccata mea ut confirmarem quod ante perlegeram. Sed quis me credit etsi dixero quod ante praefatus sum?*

For this is why I have pondered writing this, but I hesitated until now; I feared that I would fall afoul of the tongues of men because I did not learn, in such a good manner, as had other men, to drink of the law and sacred letters. These men at no time were in want of eloquence, but rather were always moving toward perfection. For our discourse and speech are translated in an alien tongue and without difficulty one is able to see the extent of my education and erudition from a taste of my writing. Because, as the wise say, wisdom, skill, and the doctrine of truth become known through the tongue.

But why give a true excuse, especially when it is presumptuous, since in the moroseness of old age I strive eagerly for what pupils gain in their youth? In my youth, my sins stood before me so that I could not clearly

examine that which I read. But what good is it to lend this premise now?

(237, 1.9-10)

Patrick claims to have refrained from writing due to his fear of the judgments of more learned men. This passage, and others like it in the *Confessio* and the *Epistola*, has led scholars to debate the critics Patrick feared. What men were “always moving toward perfection” in eloquence and had drank “of the law and sacred letters”? There are numerous interpretations of this section of the text, including bishops in Britain, *rhetors* present in Ireland, and, most likely, Pelagian bishops present in Ireland. As noted above, the Pelagian presence in Britain and Ireland was the reason for Patrick’s mission to begin with. The Pelagians, and especially Pelagius himself, were notorious orators who went toe to toe with St. Augustine in defending the heretical doctrine that did away with the necessity of grace in salvation. This interpretation is reinforced by the numerous allusions to grace that appear throughout the rest of the text. It should be clear here, too, that Patrick was not wanting in rhetorical skill as he employs humility, textual knowledge, imitation, and metaphor, all in a second language, and in this single passage.

## CHAPTER 10

## SUPPLEMENTARITY AND THEOLOGICAL ETHOS: LETTERS FROM GOD

The complexity of Patrick's writing reaches its pinnacle in his use of 2 Cor 3:2-3. In this part of the Letter to the Corinthians, Paul provides a metaphor with far reaching implications for Patrick's understanding of the art of rhetoric and writing, referring to proselytes as "letters of recommendation" delivered by Christ. Patrick imitates this section of Paul's letter and, later in the *Confessio*, reveals a vision (another Pauline theme) of an angel delivering to him letters from God, one of which revealed to Patrick his calling to return to Ireland as a servant of God. These passages provide insight into rhetorical and grammatical curriculum concerning the nature and power of the written word. The New Testament, which is clearly the supreme model of study and imitation in this context, is not only a pedagogical tool for rhetorical ends, but for theological understanding, as well. Study of the scripture is paramount to God writing upon one's soul a letter of recommendation to all who encounter the written, and thus spoken, word.

Patrick begins this section alluding to 2 Cor 3:2-3:

*Sed si itaque datum mihi fuisset sicut et ceteris, uerumtamen non silerem propter retributionem, et si forte uidetur apud aliquantos me in hoc praeponere cum mea inscientia et tardiori lingua, sed etiam scriptum est enim: Linguae balbutientes uelociter discent loqui pacem*

*Quanto magis nos adpetere debemus, qui sumus, inquit, epistola Christi in salute usque ad ultimum terrae, et si non deserta, sed raturum et fortissimum scripta in cordibus uestris non atramento sed spiritu Dei uiui. Et iterum Spiritu testatur et rusticationem ab Altissimo creatam.*

But if I had been given such an existence as the others, then nevertheless, near the reward, I would not remain silent. And, if by chance I am seen as presumptuous, with my ignorance and my slow tongue, still it is written:

The tongue of the stammerer will quickly learn to speak peace.

How much more should we strive, we who are, it says, the letter of Christ in salvation all the way to the ends of the earth. And if this does not fail, but is ratified and most powerful, written in your heart, not in ink, but with the spirit of the living God. And once again, the Spirit bears witness, for the Most High created the rustic. (238,1.10-14)

Patrick's imitation follows the Pauline Epistle closely in form and does so impressively if by memory. In 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, Paul asks if he and other Christians might need to provide a letter of recommendation. He then writes: "*epistula nostra vos estis scripta in cordibus nostris quae scitur et legitur ab omnibus hominibus. manifestati quoniam epistula estis Christi ministrata a nobis et scripta non atramento sed Spiritu Dei vivi non in tabulis lapideis sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus*" "You are our letter [of recommendation], written in our hearts, which is to be known and read by all men: you are the letter of Christ, delivered by us, and written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone but in the tablets of the heart." Those who preach the word of God are the letter (Epistle) of God. The message this letter carries is salvation and it is written "not in ink, but with the spirit of the living God." One cannot help but think here of the writing on the soul Socrates espouses in *Phaedrus*.

As Derrida demonstrated of this episode in Plato's text, writing here is primary. In *Phaedrus*, one who had travelled nearer the Forms while in spirit form bore this mark in

writing on the soul. The nearer one approached the Forms, the more readily one may come to realize this true existence while in the mire of material reality, which is really no reality at all. The writing on the soul assisted the embodied spirit in remembering the true reality. In Paul's text, we see this Platonic theme, yet the true reality of Plato's Forms is replaced by the *logos* of the Spirit of the living God. It is the writing of the Spirit of the living God upon the soul of those who hear the word, of those who hear Patrick's words that he has written that recommends the hearers to God. Those words uttered by the proselyte supplement the written, but nonetheless living, word of God. Agamben's claim of the primacy of writing in monastic order is affirmed in this passage as it is the writing of God on the heart of the proselyte, here the bishop of Ireland, which not only determines *ethos*, but which persuades the listener.

Patrick's account of his vision, which revealed to him his calling to return to Ireland, also came in the form of letter. After returning home from his captivity, Patrick experienced this vision:

*Et ibi scilicet uidi in uisu noctis uirum uenientem quasi de Hiberione, cui nomen Victoricus, cum epistolis innumerabilibus, et dedit mihi unam ex his et legi principium epistolae continentem 'Vox Hiberionacum,' et cum recitabam principium epistolae putabam ipso momento audire uocem ipsorum, qui errant iuxta siluam Vocluti quae est prope mare occidentale...*

And there in that place I saw a vision of the night, as though from Ireland, a man whose name was Victoricus came with innumerable letters, and delivered to me a single one out of them all. I read the letter and "The

voice of the Irish” was contained in it, and when having read the beginning, by that moment I thought I heard the voice of those who wander around the forest of Foclut, near the western sea. (242,23.16-22)

Patrick’s vision of Victoricus, a man who appeared holding “innumerable letters” is significant to Patrick’s conception of writing. Patrick’s own understanding of his purpose, his calling, came from the letter carried by Victoricus, but undoubtedly, in Patrick’s mind, sent by God. Certainly, one can surmise from this what Patrick thought those who encounter his *Epistola* and *Confessio* should think; the word of God has been spoken through Patrick, and it is written on his heart. Importantly, “”The Voice of the Irish”” was “contained” in the letter, as well. It is not that the letter represents, or stands in place of the voice of the Irish, but that voice was contained within it. Upon reading the beginning of the letter, Patrick hears the voices of those Irish who were once his captives calling for him to return to Ireland. This is certainly no simplistic understanding of representation and supplementation, but demonstrates the reverence with which Patrick, and presumably those monastic school teachers from whom he learned writing and rhetoric, approached the art of writing, for to them this writing was the *logos* of God.



## CHAPTER 11

## IMITATION AND GRACE

Imitation and grace are rhetorical and theological themes that run throughout the entirety of Patrick's *Confessio*. However, in the following sections these themes are seen to be highly significant to Patrick's rhetorical style and strategy. One will recall that the debate between Augustine and the Pelagians was over the doctrine of grace. The Pelagians believed that one could realize salvation on one's own without the grace of God, a position determined to be heretical by the Roman church and one directly confronted by Augustine. The Pelagians were also notorious for their rhetorical abilities. Patrick's frequent allusions to the significance of grace in his own experience form an aspect of his rhetorical strategy that sought to spread a form of Christianity in line with that championed by Augustine and the Roman Church.

It is also clear that Patrick married content and form in his use of imitation. That is, Patrick imitates the model of the Pauline Epistles while demonstrating the manner in which his life imitates that model set forth by Paul himself and while calling on his audience to imitate Paul, Christ, and himself. This is a complex rhetorical strategy that Patrick masterfully applies to his contemporary context, which he also compares to Paul's context.

Further evidence for rhetorical awareness and strategy are seen in Patrick's direct address of rhetoricians. It may be assumed from the discussion of grace in the same passage that these addressees were Pelagians, or at the very least, were Patrick's enemies in a public context:

*Unde autem ammiramini itaque magni et pusilli qui timetis Deum et uos dominicati rethorici audite et scrutamini. Quis me stultum excitauit de medio eorum qui uidentur esse sapientes et legis periti et potentes in sermone et in omni re, et me quidem, detestabilis huius mundi, prae ceteris inspirauit si talis essem – dummodo autem – ut cum metu et reuerentia et sine querella fideliter prodessem genti ad quam caritas Christi transtulit et donauit me in uita mea, si dingus fuero, denique ut cum humilitate et ueraciter deseruirem illis.*

Now behold, as has been said, you great and small that fear God and you master rhetoricians, listen and examine. Who summoned me, a fool, forth from the midst of you who seem to be wise and skillful in law and powerful in word and in every other thing? And I, indeed the detestable of the world, before the rest, God inspired me so that I should serve with fear and reverence and with no blame, the people to whom the love of Christ brought me, and to whom I was given to the end of my days if I am found worthy. (238,1.13-14)

That Patrick distinguishes between the “great and small that fear God” and the “master rhetoricians” is significant. The disjunction of the “*et*” suggests that the rhetoricians are excluded from those who fear God. Yet, they are those who “seem to be wise” and are “skillful in law and powerful in word and in every other thing.” Those who appear to be sagacious due to a mastery of the art of rhetoric have commonly been identified as sophists. One will recall Augustine’s condemnation of sophistry discussed above. The parallel in this instance is striking for it certainly would appear that Patrick is attacking

these rhetoricians for their sophistry while claiming that wisdom lies not in the erudition of the scholar, but can only be born of the divine grace of God, which Patrick has been granted. It is very likely that in this instance, Patrick is attacking Pelagian *rhetors* with whom Patrick had contact with either while in Ireland, or while in Britain.

Patrick establishes *ethos* by once again imitating Paul. This is a further indication that his intended audience, the Pelagian, sophist rhetors and those “great and small who fear God,” would have likely been aware of scripture. Such allusions to 2 Cor 5:14 and the Pauline theme of one who, according to God’s grace, serves God being without blame which is witnessed in Phil 2:15, 3:6, and 1 Thes 2:10, 3:13, and 5:28 establish an awareness of audience and establishes Patrick’s credibility as one of those holy people who live without blame. 2 Cor 5:14 reads “*caritas enim Christi urget nos*” “the charity of Christ brings us.” As Paul and the prophets before him were sent to foreign lands to spread the Good News, Patrick is in Ireland due to the grace of God and not of his own accord. In imitating Paul in both form and content, Patrick establishes his own *ethos* in a manner that appeals to the various members of his audience.

That a Pelagian audience is at least a part of Patrick’s audience is further supported by allusion to grace by way of Paul. Although one might claim that grace was a standard aspect of most theology and that Patrick’s belief in the doctrine does not necessarily indicate a concern with Pelagianism, the evidence cited above suggests otherwise. Considering Patrick’s association with St. Germanus, who the reader will recall engaged in rhetorical dispute with Pelagius, and considering that the initial intentions of Palladius’s, and subsequently Patrick’s, missions to Ireland were intended to assure conformation to Roman Canon Law, and to eliminate Pelagian elements, the

evidence does indeed point to a Pelagian element of this rhetorical context. Significantly, Pelagius himself used the Pauline Epistles, particularly Romans, in order to justify his doctrine. Perhaps most interesting is that Pelagian teaching “entails a peculiar kind of Christology...Christ’s chief importance lies primarily in the fact that he is the giver of the New Law, and secondarily in that he is the model whom we are to imitate as far as possible” (Herren 75). This understanding illuminates the rhetorical intentions of the imitation of Paul throughout Patrick’s text as a rhetorical rebuttal to those Pelagians in Ireland or Britain who upheld a belief in Pelagian doctrine. Using Paul as his model, as had Pelagius, and embracing imitation, Patrick’s rhetoric seeks to model the significance of grace in his own life, and in the lives of those to whom God grants it.

The first instance to be discussed uses the humility *topos* reflecting the style of the Pauline Epistles:

*Et non eram dignus neque talis ut hoc Dominus seruuulo suo concederet,  
post aerumnas et tantas moles, post captiuitatem, post annos multos in  
gentem illam tantam gratiam mihi donaret; quod ego aliquando in  
iuuentute mea numquam speraui neque cogitaui.*

And I was not deserving, nor was I such a man that God was to give this to his servant after hardships, and such burdens, after captivity and after many years among those people He granted me great grace, and this was something I had never hoped for. (239,15.10-13)

Patrick is sure to specify that he was not deserving of the grace that God granted to him. In Pelagian doctrine, God’s grace is available to all. Yet, the theological conundrum lies in the collision of free will and grace: “There it is asserted that man can achieve salvation

by his own free will. In sharp opposition to Augustine and his followers, Pelagians defined grace as created nature itself (which includes the freedom of the will), the laws of Moses and Christ, and instruction” (Herren 71). Patrick suggests that not only was he unworthy of the grace of God, but he had not worked for it; it was granted and never hoped for. Indeed, it was no doing of his own, but the grace of God that led Patrick to his salvation and to his calling in Ireland. As for instruction, Patrick claims here that in no way was his instruction up to par. While this has traditionally been interpreted as a literal regret of lack of education on Patrick’s part, rather than humility *topos*, it is also a refutation of the significance of instruction and free will over grace in Pelagianism.

This strain is compounded in the following section of Patrick’s text that stresses the role of God in the granting of grace:

*Et munera multa mihi offerebantur cum fletu et lacrimis et offendi illos, nec non contra uotum aliquantis de senioribus meis, sed gubernante Deo nullo modo consensi neque adqueui illis – non mea gratia, sed Deus qui uincit in me et resistit illis omnibus, ut ego ueneram ad Hibernas gentes euangelium praedicare et ab incredulis contumelias perferre, ut audirem obprobrium peregrinationis meae, et persecutions multas usque ad uincula.*

And many gifts were offered to me with weeping and sorrow and I offended them and not only opposed the vows to my elders, but under the guidance of God, and in no way did I agree with them at all. Not my grace, but God that overcame in me and withstood them all, in order that I go to the Irish heathen to preach the Good News and from the faithless to bear

insults, in order that I hear the abuse of my pilgrimage, and many  
persecutions, including bondage. (245,34.21- 28)

Patrick stresses that it was “Not my grace, but God,” which can be understood as God’s grace, that led him to his circumstance. He was not acting according to his own free will, even in disagreeing with his elders about his decision to return to Ireland, but was being directed by God. Patrick also stresses that the outcome of God’s grace was not pleasant, at least in the sense of his earthly experience. In imitation of 2 Tm 2:9-13, Patrick says God’s grace led him to preach to the Irish, bearing insults, abuse, persecution, and bondage.

Patrick’s focus on the significance of imitation must be understood in several different senses. First, Patrick imitates Pauline Epistles, as well as several other sections of the New Testament, in his own writing. This establishes *ethos* for Patrick and establishes the rhetorical pedagogical practice as significant in early monastic curriculum. Second, Patrick stresses the need to imitate Christ, which is the end of the Christian form of life. This second sense of imitation, however, aligns with Pelagian doctrine. It is in the third sense of imitation, the imitation of the prophets, that Patrick distinguishes his understanding of imitation from Pelagianism:

*Qui mihi ostendit ut indubitabilem eum sine fine crederem et qui me  
audierit ut ego inscius et in nouissimis diebus hoc opus tam pium et tam  
mirificum auderem adgredere, ita ut imitarem quippiam illos quos ante  
Dominus iam olim praedixerat praenuntiatiuros euangelium suum in  
testimonium omnibus gentibus ante finem mundi, quod ita ergo uidimus*

*itaque suppletum est: ecce testes sumus quia euangelium praedicatum est usque ubi nemo ultra est.*

It is him [God] who has shown me that I can trust and believe him without limit and that I, ignorant and newest born on this day, should dare to work devoutly at such wondrous, extraordinary work. That I should imitate those to whom the Lord prophesied the Good News to be preached beyond all borders of the world for all nations to see: This is what we see: it is complete. Behold! We witness the preaching of the Good News that has been preached out beyond where any man is! (245, 34.21-28)

Again, the anti-Pelagian sentiment is palpable. Patrick referring to himself as ignorant refutes the Pelagian teaching that ignorance is no excuse and that instruction and free will lead to salvation. Patrick also claims that he “should imitate those to whom the Lord prophesied the Good News” and not just Christ. Patrick is imitating the prophets not only in the form his life has taken, but in his writing and rhetoric, as well. He imitates the Pauline theme and model in his own attack on Pelagianism. Patrick also writes that God’s will in spreading the city of God, an Augustinian theme, is complete in his preaching in Ireland.

Patrick establishes the rhetorical context of his writing, as well as the imitative context of his mission to Ireland, through imitation of Paul, and especially 1 Rom. In this 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Romans, Paul describes the practices of those Greek and Roman pagans prior to the dominance of Christianity:

*dicentes enim se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt... et mutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis Dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et*

*volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium*” “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man and birds, and four-footed beasts and snakes.” (1Rom 1:22-23)

Patrick describes the people of Ireland in a similar light:

*Unde autem Hiberione qui numquam notitiam Dei habuerunt nisi idola et immunda usque nunc semper coluervnt quomodo nuper facta est plebs Domini et filii Dei nuncupantur, filii Scottorum et filiae regulorum monachi et uirgines Christi esse uidentur?*

Thence to be sure in Ireland they never had knowledge of God except idols and up to now always celebrated filthy things. Recently the common people have made a change to the Lord and are called sons of God, sons of the Irish and daughters of kings, nuns, and are seen to be virgins of Christ. (248, 41.6-9)

Patrick takes for his source at the end of this passage 1 Rom 8:14: “*quicumque enim Spiritu Dei aguntur hii filii sunt Dei*” “Whoever is led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” As was witnessed in Patrick’s *Letter*, those who have received God’s grace have entered the Christian family. On one hand, Patrick argues here for the effectiveness of his mission. On the other, argues for the legitimacy of his position, as a bishop and as a *rhetor*, in comparing his mission and context with that of Paul. This provides a clearer picture of the rhetorical context in which Patrick was writing.



Patrick continues this rhetorical strategy of imitating both form of life and the Epistles of Paul. In going to Ireland, Patrick has put himself in harm's way and faces calamity and poverty, just as Paul did:

*Sed uideo iam in praesenti saeculo me supra modum exaltatum a Domino,  
et non eram dignus neque talis ut hoc mihi praestaret, dum scio certissime  
quod mihi melius conuenit paupertas et calamitas quam diuitiae et diliciae  
(sed et Christus Dominus pauper fuit pro nobis, ego uero miser et infelix  
etsi opes uoluero iam non habeo, neque me ipsum iudico)*

But I see already in this present time the Lord has greatly exalted me, and I was not yet the kind of worthy person who would stand out, yet I understand with certainty that poverty and calamity are better for me than riches and calamity are (but Christ the Lord was poor for us, so I, too, resolve to be poor and miserable and unfortunate, and even if I wanted riches I do not have them and I cannot judge myself). (251,55.19-24)

To imitate Christ and Paul is not only to imitate them in deed, but in every facet, including pain, poverty, and suffering. Certainly, this benevolent form of life would have appealed to many of the Irish living in the poverty and chaos that marked the political landscape of early Ireland.

In the final section of Patrick's *Confessio*, he draws upon several Pauline Epistles in order to appeal to *pathos*, *ethos*, and humility. The following sections demonstrate the frequency with which Patrick spoke of imitation, as well as the manner in which he saw himself imitating the holy form of life. Also, it is made even clearer the extent to which

the Augustinian doctrine of divine grace was informing Patrick's philosophical and theological position, as well as his conception of his position:

*Sed ex illis maxime laborant quae seruitio detinentur: usque ad terrores et minas assidue perferunt; sed Dominus gratiam dedit multis ex ancillis suis, nam etsi uetantur tamen fortiter imitantur.*

But out of all those [women] who are held in slavery labor hardest: continually they are driven to fear and unceasingly bear it; but God has given his grace to his multitude of maidservants, for though they are forbidden nevertheless, they strongly imitate [the Lord, the Lord's form of life]. (248,42.20-23)

*...quia multi hanc legationem prohibebant, etiam inter se ipsos pos tergum meum narrabant et dicebant* "Iste quare se mittit in periculo inter hostes qui Deum non nouerunt?" – *non ut causa malitiae, sed non sapiebat illis, sicut et ego ipse testor, intellegi porpter rusticitatem meam – et non cito agnouit gratiam quae tunc erat in me; nunc mihi sapit quod ante debueram.*

...Because many were prohibiting my envoy, even among themselves talking behind my back and telling stories: "Why does this man himself go in peril among foreigners who do not know God?" – this was not caused by spite, but they did not understand this, and as I myself witness, on account of knowing my rusticity – and I was not quick to testify the strange grace that then was in me; now I understand what I ought to have before this. (249,46.23-29)

*Nunc ergo simpliciter insinuavi fratribus et conseruis meis qui mihi crediderunt propter quod praedixi et praedico ad robarandam et confirmandam fidem uestram. Utinam ut et uos imitemini maiora et potiora faciatis! Hoc erit Gloria mea, quia filius sapiens Gloria patris est.*

At present, on account of simplicity, I have told my brothers and my servants who believe me because I preached and I preach to strengthen and confirm your faith. Oh that you would imitate a great man and create greater things! This would be my Glory, because the wise son is the Glory of the father. (249,47.30-34)

*Et si aliquid boni umquam imitatus sum propter Deum meum, quem diligo, peto illi det mihi ut cum illis proselitibus et captiuis pro nomine suo effundam sanguinem meum, etsi ipsam etiam caream sepulturam aut miserissime cadauer per singula membra diuidatur canibus aut bestiis asperis aut uolucres caeli comederent illud...et conformes future imagines ipsius; quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso regnaturi sumus.*

And if at any time I imitated something good, for the sake of my God, whom I love, I seek that he deliver me so that with other proselytes and captives so that in his name I may pour forth my blood, although I may be without a grave or that my wretched corpse each limb may be torn apart by dogs and perilous beasts and eaten by birds of heaven...and conformed to his image; for from him and through him and in him we shall reign.

(252,59.12-17 and 20-21)

Here there is a repetition of the themes outlined above. Patrick, in imitating Christ and the prophets, has faced suffering and pain, but has done so in order that others may be saved. He has achieved this goal in his mission. In this latter section of the text, Humphries' definition of *Confessio* as procurement of oneself from memory is witnessed. Patrick is not only calling on others to follow this form of life and imitate the model set forth in his *Confessio*, (the primary impetus of this text), but he is also providing an account of all that he has suffered and lost, including physical pain, persecution, and separation from his family. From the depths of his memories, Patrick is painting a picture of his life that is in line with scripture and that also seeks to reconcile and understand the existence he has lived. This is particularly clear when Patrick writes "and I was not quick to testify the strange grace that then was in me; now I understand what I ought to have before this."

Patrick concludes the *Confessio* by employing humility *topos*, and most importantly, declaring God's role in the composition of the text, as well as the content which inspired that composition:

*Ecce iterum iterumque breuiter exponam uerba Confessio is meae.  
Testificor in ueritate et in exultatione cordis coram Deo et sanctis angelis  
eiu quia numquam habui aliquam occasionem praeter evangelium et  
promissa illius ut umquam redirem ad gentem ilam unde prius uix  
euaseram.*

Behold! Again and again I have briefly put before you the words of my *Confessio*. I witness in truth and with a rejoicing heart before God and his holy angels that never, at any time, have I supported any occasion to have

returned except [to carry] the Good News and promise to those people from which I earlier had barely escaped.

*Sed precor credentibus et timentibus Deum, quicumque dignatus fuerit inspicere uel recipere hanc scripturam quam Patricius peccator indoctus scilicet Hiberione conscripsit, ut nemo umquam dicat quod mea ignorantia, si aliquid pusillum egi uel demonstraui secundum Dei placitum, sed arbitramini et uerissime credatur quod donum Dei fuisset. Et haec est confessio mea antequam moriar.*

But I pray for those who believe in and who have a fear in God, whoever may be worthy to look upon or to restore this writing which Patrick, the sinner, ignorant to be sure, wrote in Ireland, so that no man at any time would say that whatever little I did, I did out of my ignorance, nor was anything I genuinely demonstrated according to God's approval out of my ignorance, but you should judge and you should genuinely believe this was the gift of God. And this is my Confessio before I die. (253.61.5-62.16)

Humility and grace work together in establishing the ethos of the document, which was not only given as the grace of God, but as the gift of God. All of the works Patrick has achieved, including the baptism of thousands of people, was the work of God. Here Patrick, in claiming his humility, also reveals what is a new rhetorical strategy. Ignorance should not be mistaken for the works of God. The masterful ornamentation of the sophists holds no weight with the new Christian audience, who strive for truth and humility. Certainly, this is not only a document that relates those deeds to the intended

audience, but Patrick establishes for himself, “procuring from the depths of memory,” that self that he wishes others to see and that he understands.

## CHAPTER 12

## CONCLUSION

Patrick's writings reveal much about the nature of the art of rhetoric in Briton and Ireland in the early medieval period. It is clear that several aspects of classical rhetoric were adapted to letter writing and the confession genre. The significance of writing grew in this period and the art of rhetoric provided the means necessary to further develop this art.

This leaves multiple implications for the study of the history of rhetoric, and for the history of rhetoric and classical learning in Ireland. To begin, the myth of Ireland as having existed outside the reaches of the Roman Empire and as having been excluded from European and Roman culture is expelled. Ireland was not an isolated, rustic backwater. Though there is evidence that Christianity and writing may have existed in Ireland prior to the arrivals of Palladius and Patrick, it is certain that Patrick's writing provides a sound example of the nature of monastic education in Briton, and presumably Ireland, in the fourth century.

The extent to which Ireland was a part of the European world in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is witnessed in the very impetus for Patrick's having been sent to Ireland. Both Palladius and Patrick were sent to Ireland in order to confront the threat of Pelagianism in the British Isles. Rome clearly had an interest in Ireland and desired that Christianity on the island be in line with Roman Canon Law. That there was Christianity in Ireland that needed to be brought in line with these precepts clearly demonstrates the influence of Rome on the island. Patrick's emphasis on grace in the *Confessio* reveals the rhetorical ends of his writings; Patrick sought to preach the Christian form of life and not only

convert new Christians, but to assure that those who were already converted were theologically in conformity with Roman Canon Law.

The current study has brought to light significant questions regarding the nature of *imitatio* in the early medieval period. Since Patrick's writings are the earliest extant in Ireland, more in depth and focused study of his use of *imitatio* in the texts that have served as the focus of this study would benefit the field. Moreover, analysis of contemporary texts in Britain and Spain would help to shed light on the changing nature of *imitatio*. For example, to what extent was this rhetorical exercise integral to theological education and the Christian form of life? In what ways did early Christian rhetorical exercises continue to inculcate "habits of thought that transcended mere preparation for studying rhetoric" (Hock 106) in this new context? In what ways does this new Christian style compare with the sophistic style of Roman orators? Similar questions will be pertinent to rhetorical exercises, especially *imitatio*, in later Irish grammarians and writers, as well.

Patrick's agenda regarding Pelagianism is also seen in his imitation of the most famous opponent of Pelagianism, St. Augustine. In this imitation, there is also evidence of the type of education that Patrick received. Undoubtedly, Patrick's education was monastic and centered around grammar, reading, rhetoric, and writing. Classical rhetoric survived in the early medieval period mainly in the form of *progymnasmata* and *declamatio*. Patrick studied the art of letter writing, a relatively new development in rhetorical education. Patrick also studied the New Testament extensively. It seems likely that Augustine's assertion that content should mirror style was taken seriously in the curriculum Patrick was trained in.



For this reason, the criticisms of Patrick's Latin that have marked Patrician scholarship, and led the likes of Lynch astray in their analyses, are unwarranted. Patrick was trained in a rhetorical curriculum that took the Bible as the primary source of study for training in grammar, rhetoric, and of course, theology. The seeming simplicity of Patrick's texts is not due to a lack of education, but due to the nature of his education. Even though Patrick lived in captivity during what would have been his most formative educational years, since he was born into an aristocratic family, it is very likely that he advanced more quickly through his education than may have been common for other boys his age. It is evident that Patrick was trained in the tradition of Quintilian and Cicero, though using the New Testament, and primarily the Pauline Epistles, as the main source of study. Most apparent in the texts are *ethopoeia*, *ecphrasis*, *imitation*, *protreptic*, *paraphrasis*, and the humility *topos*. These tropes and strategies from the classical rhetorical tradition shed light on the nature of Patrick's education, and therefore rhetorical education in general during this period, as well the level of sophistication he achieved in his writing.

Patrick's *Epistola* utilizes these rhetorical strategies in several complex and effective ways. In large part, this text imitates in a direct manner the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament. From the letter's opening the humility *topos* is apparent, which is also a defining feature of the Pauline Epistles. Patrick not only imitates the rhetorical strategies used by Paul, but also in the letter describes the manner in which his life imitates the example set by Paul. In imitating Paul, Patrick establishes credibility with those Christians in his audience. Also in doing this, Patrick is calling on others to imitate Christ, Paul, and himself. In this, *protreptic* is also used effectively. Further study

regarding what monastic rules were likely to have been common to Patrick will help produce a more specific understanding of Christian form of life in Patrick's texts. In order to persuade his audience to convert to the Christian form of life, which consists in *imitatio* of the example set by Christ and his apostles, *protreptic* and *paraenetic* are used. In imitation of the New Testament, Patrick uses much *paraphrasis*, likely a skill that was studied frequently in the monastic rhetoric classroom.

The most frequently used rhetorical strategies of the letter are *imitatio* and *ecphrasis*. Patrick uses powerful language in describing the murders committed by Coroticus and his followers. This language serves to persuade his audience not only to convert to the Christian form of life, but also to forsake the social practices represented by Coroticus and his soldiers. Once again, this speaks to the creativity and level of skill Patrick possesses. Instead of merely deriding the events and calling for something different, he employs these strategies in order to powerfully describe and thus successfully persuade his audience to imitate the Christian form of life.

This study warrants further inquiry into letter writing in early Christian Ireland. Chronologically speaking, the next significant letter writer in Ireland was Columbanus, whose breadth of knowledge and influence was touched upon early in this study. A comparison of rhetorical strategies, along with a close rhetorical analysis of Columbanus's letters will help provide a more well rounded understanding of this rhetorical art in Ireland in the early years of Christianity there.

In the "*Confessio*," similar rhetorical strategies are employed. Patrick imitates the *Confessiones* of Augustine in form, and imitates the Pauline Epistles in content. Of course, as the *Confessio* is understood here as the procurement of self from the depths of

memory, as well as a rhetorical strategy that seeks to persuade the audience to imitate the example set by the confessor, there is much original to the text. While there is no direct allusion to Augustine or his writings in Patrick's text, Peter Dronke demonstrates convincingly the extent of Augustine's writings on Patrick's text. The influence is not only generic, but also can be seen in the description of the visions. In addition, there are numerous allusions to the significance of grace from God as the primary source of salvation, something Augustine argued for in debate with the Pelagians. As with the letter, Patrick's *Confessio* is written in a simplistic style and utilizes the humility *topos* frequently. In this text, the Pauline Epistles are cited numerous times throughout. Considering these contributions to an understanding of early Christian rhetoric in the medieval period, a study of the genre of confession in a comparative, continental context would provide many interesting results that would help to illuminate an understanding of confession as a rhetorical practice, one closely tied to *imitatio*.

St. Patrick's writings provide historians of rhetoric with insight into the nature of monastic education in the early medieval period in the British Isles. This study elucidates the most significant instances of rhetorical astuteness of Patrick's part while considering the socio-historical context in which Patrick wrote.

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